

THE *Forster of
Chester
1884*
MARTYRDOM
OF
IGNATIUS. *71*

A
TRAGEDY.

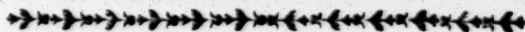
WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1740,

BY THE LATE JOHN GAMBOLD, M. A.

At that time Minister of Stanton-Harcourt, Oxfordshire.

TO WHICH ARE ANNEXED,

The Life of IGNATIUS, drawn from Authentic Accounts,
and from the Epistles written by him from Smyrna and
Troas, in his Way to Rome. Also that of POLYCARP.

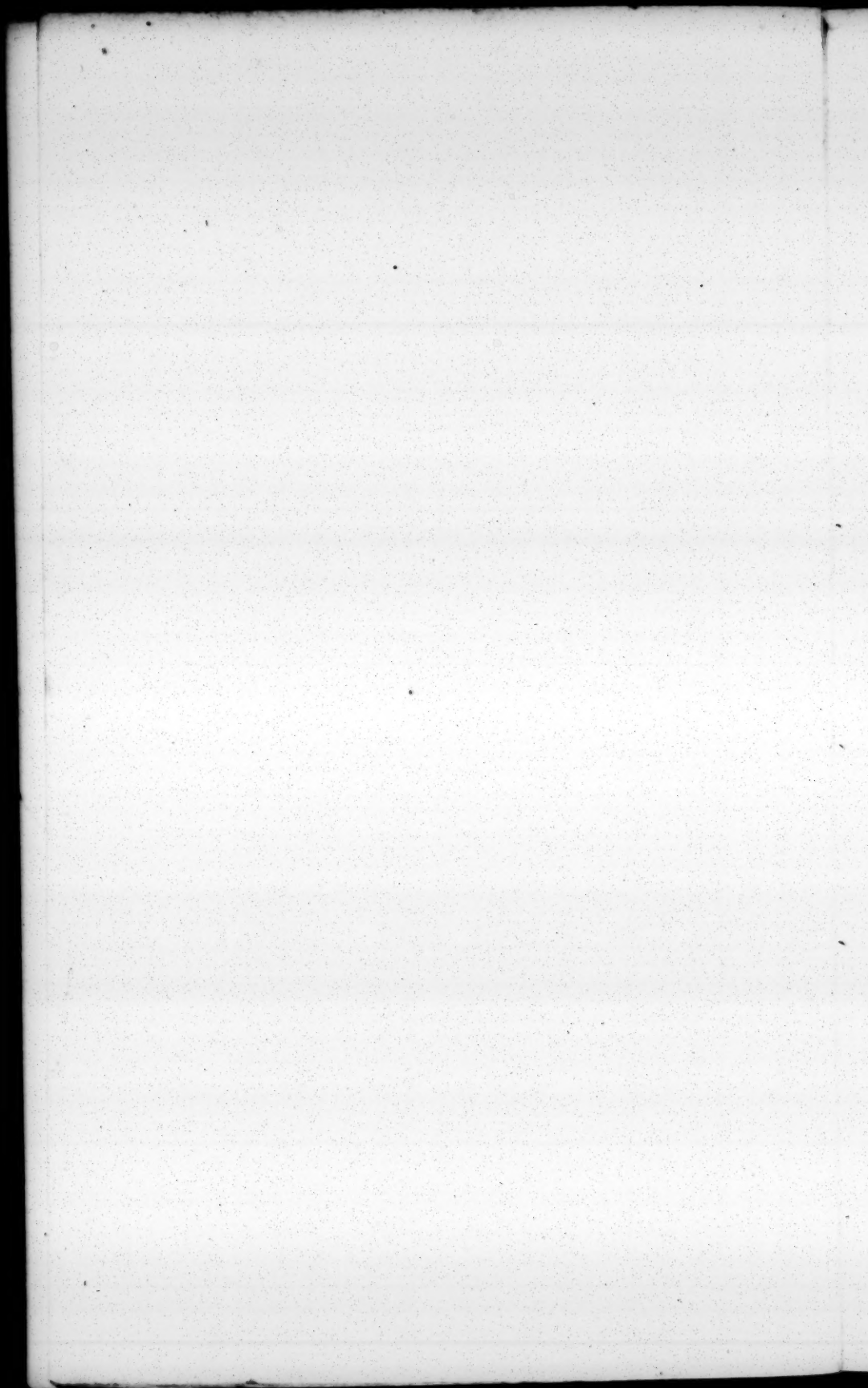


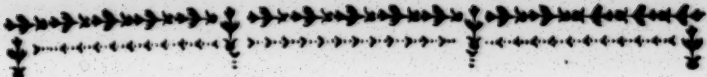
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P R E F A C E.

THE Reverend and truly venerable Author of the Tragedy of the Martyrdom of St. Ignatius was, in the year 1740, when he wrote it, minister of Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire; but whether he ever intended it for publication is not known. So much is certain, that some years before his decease he was not even possessed of a copy of it, and out of his peculiar modesty, and perhaps because he knew that it was not perfect, according to the generally received rules of the drama, and for, some other reasons, he wished that it had not strayed, in manuscript, into the hands of some of his friends, who valued it highly, not only on account of their esteem for the author, but for its own excellence in point of sentiment.

Those who had the happiness to be intimately acquainted with the author, knew that he was of a very studious turn of mind, and could not be satisfied with the surface and appearance of things, but sought eagerly after useful and necessary truth, and was unwearied in his researches. This induced him not only to read with great attention the holy scriptures, but to study the fathers of the first centuries, believing that in them he should find the strongest features of the christian religion, and the fullest proofs of what was the doctrine, discipline, and temper of the christian church, at and immediately after the times of the apostles.

He was at a certain time so given up, if we may thus express it, to the company of the fathers, and so taken with their manners that he unintentionally became in his way of thinking, speaking, and acting, as though he had lived in the first or second century, and in the closest intimacy with Ignatius, Polycarp, &c.

He had in his youth a great fondness for dramatic pieces, both antient and modern; and though we cannot find that he ever frequented the theatres any where, yet looking upon dramatic writings as a pleasing and impressive manner of conveying ideas and actions to others, we suppose he formed the plan of giving, if not to the public, yet to some of his friends, a representation of the state, principles, and practice of the christians in the first and second century, in a dramatic composition.

He certainly believed, that a piece, wherein the love of Christ, shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost is set forth as producing the most excellent principles in the human soul; viz. devotion to God, love to our neighbours, humility, forbearance, aptness to forgive, yea to love and bless even bitter, active, and powerful enemies, would be more suited and edifying to a christian reader, than such as are too much *in vogue* to the reproach of christianity; in which, lust, pride, ambition, &c. are called in to assist in the production of something like virtue, but which cannot be worthy of that name when proceeding from such vile and poisoned sources.

Our author in writing this tragedy adhered to history, and has therefore attended Ignatius at Antioch, and from thence to Rome, by the same
road

P R E F A C E.

v

road which he travelled. He has given him the same company which he then had; and has presented Ignatius, Polycarp, and the bishops and deacons who attended at Smyrna to our view, in such a clear and lively manner, that we are brought into their company, and hear them speak the sentiments written in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, and see them act agreeable to the most authentic accounts which are handed down to us, of what passed at that time. And the whole performance is so agreeable to the spirit of that period, that there is hardly any thing that can be called his but the dress.

What Ignatius speaks to the Romans in the fifth act, is only a version of what he wrote to the christians at Rome.

The reasonings of the two philosophers for and against the christian scheme may be difficult for some readers to understand, but bespeak the genius of the most candid and upright of that class of men in those and later times. We wish that the philosophers of our day were always willing to discuss the essential tenets of christianity with the same openness, and to receive the force of truth, grounded upon experience: then would the supercilious sneer of contempt, and the prompt rejection of christianity at the first mentioning it, give way to, at least, a mild and tolerant temper.

We do not present this to the public as a perfect dramatic performance; we are sensible it will not bear, in all respects, to be examined by the strict rules of criticism. The author has not attended to unity of time and place; but for this he will not be blamed by the admirers of Shakespeare,

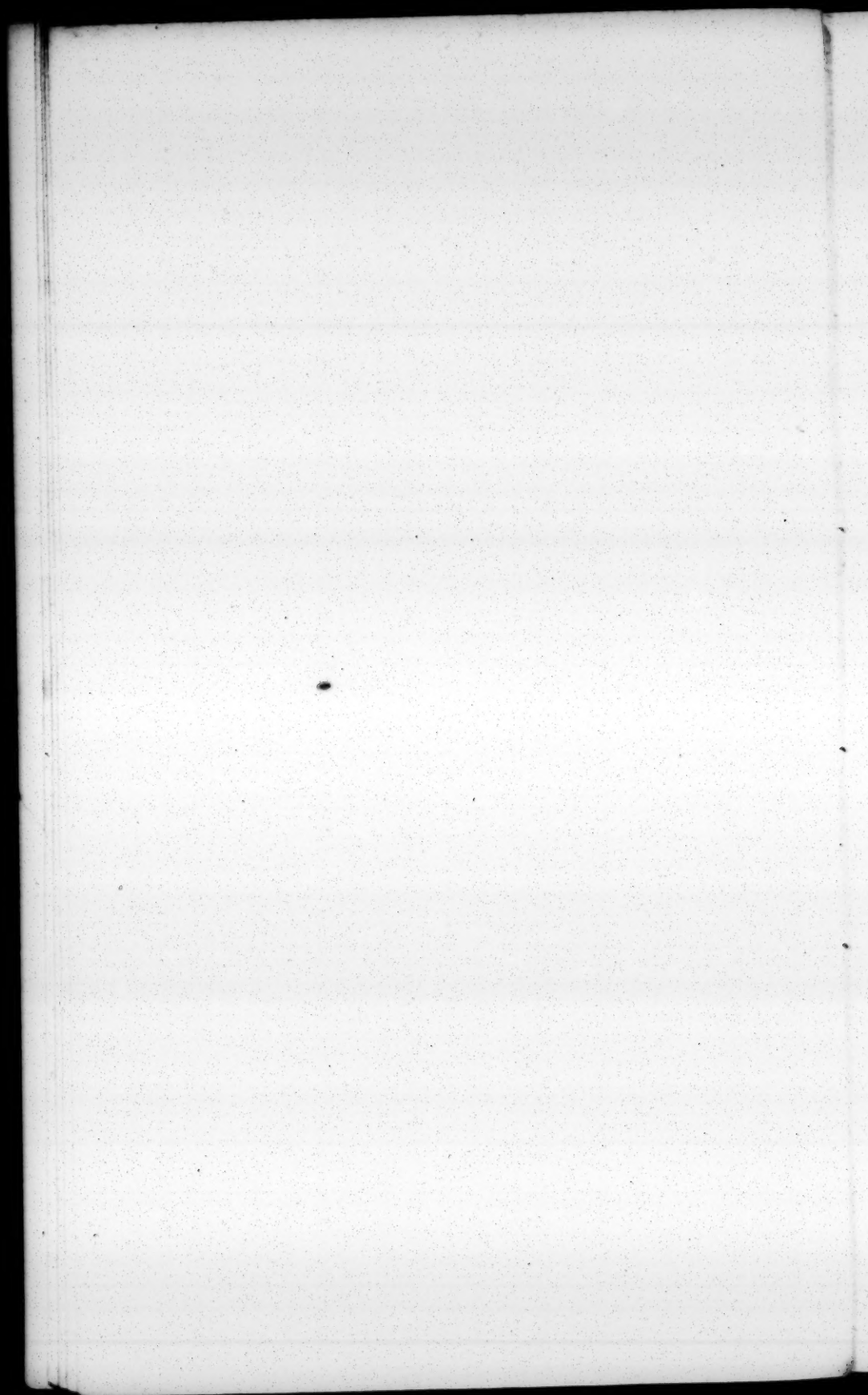
or by those who have read the fine tragedies of Jephtha and of John Baptist, by Buchanan. He takes no pains to render the plot intricate, and then to unravel and wind it up so as to leave the mind filled with amazement at the event ; but he follows history, without seeking to awaken the passions, or surprize by uncommon incidents ; and yet it is to be hoped, that some will feel many passages and incidents powerfully and usefully. Had our author himself published it, we are persuaded he would have given it a finishing which it cannot get now.

As this tragedy is therefore not presented to the public as a complete dramatic composition, it can afford no employment for critics in this point of view. And as to those who may be offended with the general scope of this performance, and the general tendency of the doctrines it enforces by no fictitious examples, but with historical faithfulness, they must employ their critical abilities, not on the author, but on the fathers, and even on the apostles themselves ; for we cannot help lamenting that the cross, or the power of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was, is, and will be, alas ! to many foolishness ; but to others, who are and shall be saved, the power of God and the wisdom of God. 1 Cor. i. 18.

The reason that this piece is now published is this : Sundry copies of it have been procured by different persons, and some of them are very imperfect. Many who have read it, have urged that it might be printed ; and we were not without apprehensions that it would sooner or later be published from some imperfect or erroneous copy, or by some one who might mar by attempts

to mend, and we have seen some such copies : therefore we rather choose to publish our author as we found him, with the hope that it will be of some use and a blessing to many by their not only reading, but feeling something of the spirit of the first christians. The operations and fruits of that Spirit that glorifies Jesus, must be the same in all periods of time to the end of the world.

As many readers may be unacquainted with the life of Ignatius, we have been desired to give some account of this blessed martyr ; which we will do from the best authorities that have come to our hands.





S O M E
A C C O U N T
O F
ST. IGNATIUS, THE MARTYR,
WHO WAS ALSO CALLED
T H E O P H O R U S.

FROM what parents Ignatius sprung, is not told us; nor is it certain where he was born, but this honour has been ascribed to Nora in Sardinia.

There is a tradition that he was the little child whom our blessed Lord and Saviour set before the disciples, when he told them, that *Except they were converted, and became as little children, they should not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* But as the proofs handed down to us are not sufficient to authenticate this relation, we cannot deliver it as a fact; nor is it material to our purpose, as the intention is only to give, from the best authorities, some account of what the grace of God made Ignatius to be as a christian, a bishop, and a martyr.

This appears certain, that he was contemporary and particularly acquainted with the apostles of our Lord, and received instructions from those first and inspired messengers of God our Saviour, and that he and Polycarp were more especially disciples of St. John.

Having approved himself as a christian indeed, and as a devoted and anointed servant of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was, upon the decease of Euodius, chosen by the apostles Bishop of Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, and was consecrated thereunto by them with imposition of hands.

Thus

Thus he must have continued many (it is said forty) years in this important function; and we are told, by those who attended him to his martyrdom at Rome, and who gave an account of his death, that "he was a man in all things like unto the apostles;" so that he must have been, in all respects, a worthy and venerable bishop, approving himself in the sight of all men as a faithful steward over the household of God, and that he was, as is said of him, "Like a divine lamp illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his exposition of the holy scriptures."

That he was clothed with humility, appears from all his epistles; for though so highly esteemed as a faithful shepherd and bishop, and on the way to receive that which was, in those days, esteemed the highest possible honour that a human creature and an heir of grace could possess, the crown of martyrdom, yet, in writing to the Romans, Smyrnæans, &c. concerning the church of Syria, he says of himself, "I am even ashamed to be reckoned as one of them: for neither am I worthy, being the least among them, and as one born out of due season. But through mercy I have obtained to be somebody, if I shall get to God."

That the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost, is evident from all he has written. The work of redemption by the incarnation, life, suffering, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his resurrection for our justification, being deeply impressed on his heart by the Holy Ghost, made him a living witness of the power of the great salvation to all around him, and a constant inculcator of the redemption in Christ's blood.

We must not expect to find in those of his epistles which are extant, a regular system of divinity. He wrote letters to several churches, and to Polycarp, when he was hurried to Rome under a guard of rude soldiers. We therefore find, that although the great and fundamental truths of the gospel are asserted throughout his epistles, yet he only wrote about such cases as related to their and his own circumstances at that time.

As the spirit of Jesus infuses love, meekness, forbearance, and the most real concord and union, so he, as a disciple of St. John, who learnt it on the breast of his
gracious

gracious Master, earnestly exhorted the churches to remain in brotherly love, and union of heart. Thus, in his epistle to the Magnesians, he writes, "I salute the churches; wishing in them an union both of the body and spirit of Jesus Christ, our eternal life." Again, "I exhort you to do all things in a divine concord.—Let no one look upon his neighbour after the flesh; but do you all mutually love each other in Jesus Christ." Again, "Being come together into the same place, have one *common* prayer; one supplication; one mind; one hope; in love, and in joy undefiled. There is one Lord Jesus Christ, than whom nothing is better. Wherefore come ye all together as unto one temple of God; as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who proceeded from one Father, and exists in one, and is returned *to one*." The Trallians he exhorts to "love every one his brother with an unfeigned* heart." To the Philadelphians he writes, "Come all together into one place with an undivided heart:" And he speaks out of the same spirit in all his epistles.

As this was a subject which he urged agreeable to the mind of his beloved Lord and Master, so he was fired with holy indignation against all those who sought to foment dissensions, by introducing doctrines contrary to the mind of Christ. He tells the Ephesians, "There are some who carry about the name of Christ in deceitfulness, but do things unworthy of God; these ye must flee, as ye would so many wild beasts: for they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly: against whom ye must guard yourselves as men hardly to be cured. Wherefore let no one deceive you, as indeed neither are you deceived, being wholly the servants of God. For inasmuch as there is no contention among you, which can trouble you, ye must needs live according to God's will." To the Trallians he writes, "Stop your ears, therefore, as often as any one shall speak contrary to Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David, of the virgin Mary." To the Philadelphians, "As becomes the children both of the light and of the truth: Flee divisions and false doctrines: but where your shepherd is, there do ye, as sheep, follow after. For there are many wolves

* Or undivided.

who seem worthy of belief, that, with a false * pleasure, lead captive those that run in the course of God; but in your concord they shall find no place. Be not deceived, brethren: if any one follows him that maketh a schism in the church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any walks after any other opinion, he agrees not with the passion of Christ. Love unity: flee divisions: be the followers of Christ as he was of the Father.—Where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not.”

From hence, and many other passages in his epistles, it appears evident, that there were in his days, as there had been even in the time of the apostles, men of corrupt minds, who sowed seeds of dissension among the children of God, and who turned the grace of God into licentiousness; and that he saw beforehand reason to caution the christians against such who should arise, perverting the truth, or holding it in unrighteousness; touching whom, he tells the Trallians, “That such confound together the doctrine of Jesus Christ with their own poison, whilst they seem worthy of belief, as men give a deadly poison mixed with sweet wine, which, he who is ignorant of it, does with the treacherous pleasure, sweetly drink in his own death.” He adds, “Wherefore guard yourselves against such persons; and that ye will do if ye are not puffed up.” Of such deceivers he says, in his epistle to the Ephesians, “Those that corrupt † families by adultery, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If therefore they, who do this according to the flesh, have suffered death; how much more shall he die, who, by his wicked doctrine corrupts the faith of God, for which Christ was crucified? He ‖ that is thus defiled shall depart into unquenchable fire, and so he that hearkens § unto him.”

He warns the Philadelphians against those who preach the Jewish law, and adds, “For it is better to receive the doctrine of Christ from one that has been circumcised, than Judaism from one that has not. But if either the one or the other do not speak concerning Christ Jesus, they seem to me to be but a mount of

* Or evil. † Corrupters of houses. ‖ Such an one thus defiled. § Hears him.

and sepulchres of the dead, upon which are only written the names of men. Flee therefore the wicked arts and snares of the prince of this world, lest at any time being oppressed by his cunning, ye grow cold in your love."

It is evident that he had to combat against various kinds of corrupters of the word of life, and particularly also against those who opposed the ground of our salvation, the reality of the incarnation, sufferings, and death of God our Saviour. These held, that our blessed Lord did not take on him true flesh, nor suffered really, but only in appearance, and their principles led them to all looseness and libertinism. With a view to this horrible heresy, which, with many others, began to shew their heads in the east, he writes to the Smyrnæans, "I have observed that you are settled in an immovable faith, as if you was nailed to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, both in the flesh and in the spirit; and are confirmed in love through the blood of Christ; being fully persuaded of those things which relate unto our Lord, who truly was of the race of David according to the flesh, but the Son of God according to the will and power of God; truly born of the virgin and baptized of John, that so all righteousness might be fulfilled by him. He was also truly crucified by Pontius Pilate, and Herod the tetrarch, being nailed for us in the flesh; by the fruits of which ~~we are~~, even by his most blessed passion, that he might set up a token for all ages through his resurrection, to all his holy and faithful servants, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, in one body of his church.

"Now all these things he suffered for us, that we might be saved. And he suffered truly, as he also truly raised up himself: and not as some unbelievers say, that he only seemed to suffer, they themselves only seeming to be. And as they believe, so shall it happen unto them; when being divested of the body they shall become mere spirits *.

"But I know that even after his resurrection he was in the flesh; and I believe that he is still so. And when he came to those who were with Peter, he said, Take,

* Incorporeal and demoniacs.

B

handle

handle me, and see that I am not an incorporeal Dæmon. And straightway they felt him, and believed being convinced both by his flesh and spirit. For this cause they despised death, and were above it. But after his resurrection he did eat and drink with them, as he was flesh; although, as to his spirit, he was united to his Father."

"Now these things I put you in mind of, not questioning but that you yourselves believe that they are so. But I arm you beforehand against certain beasts in the shape of men, whom you must not only not receive, but, if it be possible, not meet with." However he exhorts them to pray for their repentance.

It is evident that he looked upon the manifestation of God in the flesh, and his living, suffering, and dying the accursed death of the cross for us, as the great and effectual cause of our salvation, of the union between Christ and his members. and of the oneness of the individuals with him and with each other, by constant declarations to this effect. In his epistle to the Ephesians he says, "Let my life be sacrificed for the doctrine of the cross, which is indeed a scandal to unbelievers, but to us is salvation and eternal life. Where is the wise man? Where is the disputer? Where is the boasting of those who are called wise? For our God, Jesus Christ, was, according to the dispensation of God, conceived * in the womb of Mary, of the seed of David, by the Holy Ghost."

Speaking farther on this subject he says that this new Star shone and sent out it's light above all other stars. "Hence (says he) all the power of magic was dissolved, and every band of wickedness was destroyed; mens ignorance was taken away, and the old kingdom abolished; God himself appearing † in the form of a man for the renewal of eternal life." To the Philadelphians he writes, after speaking of those who, out of strife and a spirit of criticism, rejected or perverted the gospel, "To me Jesus Christ is instead of all the uncorrupted monuments in the world: together with those undefiled ‡ monuments, his cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith which is by him; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified." In his

* Carried. † Being made manifest. ‡ Untouched.

addresses to the church at Tralles in Asia, he calls them, "Beloved of God the Father of Jesus Christ, elect, and worthy of God, having peace through the flesh, and blood, and passion of Jesus Christ our hope, in the resurrection which is by him." In his salutation to the church of Philadelphia, he says that it "has obtained mercy, being fixed in the concord of God, and rejoicing evermore in the passion of our Lord, and being fulfilled in all mercy through his resurrection: 'which' he adds, "I salute in the blood of Jesus Christ, which is our eternal and undefiled joy." In his epistle to the Smyrnæans he writes. I salute your very worthy bishop, and your venerable presbytery, and your deacons my fellow servants, and all you in general, and every one in particular, in the name of Jesus Christ, and in his flesh and blood, and in his passion and resurrection, both bodily and spiritually, and in the unity of God with you."

Thus the stupendous work of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ was to him the foundation of all hope, and the root from whence every happy principle in the heart and every good fruit in the walk and conversation of man must spring. Yet far from looking upon christianity as the philosophers did upon their systems, as a matter of pleasing speculation only, he knew it to be powerfully operative. He therefore says, in his epistle to the Ephesians, "Christianity is not the work of an outward profession, but shews itself in the power of faith, if a man be found faithful unto the end." And to the Romans he says, "A christian is not a work of opinion, but of greatness of mind." He therefore, writing to the Ephesians, recommends faith and love, which he says are the beginning and end of life: for faith is the beginning, and the end is love; and these two joined together* are of God; but all other things, which concern a holy life, are the consequences of these." He therefore exhorts, "Let us do all things as becomes those who have God dwelling in them, that we may be his temples, and he our God." To the Trallians he writes, "Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live not after the manner of

* Being in unity.

men, but according to Jesus Christ, who died for us, that so believing in his death, ye might escape death."

Besides his instructions to love one another, he exhorts the Ephesians "to pray without ceasing for other men; for," he adds, "there is hope of repentance in them, that they may attain unto God. Let them therefore at least be instructed by your works, *if they will be no other way*. Be ye mild at their anger, humble at their boasting: To their blasphemies, *return* your prayers: to their error your firmness in the faith: When they are cruel, be ye gentle; not endeavouring to imitate their ways: let us be their brethren in all kindness and moderation, but let us be followers of the Lord; for who was ever more unjustly used, more destitute, more despised? that so no herb of the devil may be found in you; but you may remain in all holiness and sobriety, both of body and spirit, in Christ Jesus."

From hence, and much more which we might add from his own words, it is obvious what was the spirit, temper, and walk of Ignatius, who was well aware of the insufficiency of words, and the necessity of reality, as he says to the Ephesians, "It is better for a man to hold his peace, and *be* *, than to say *he is a christian*, and not to be. It is good to teach; if what he says, he does *likewise*." And again he saith, "No man professing a true faith, sinneth; neither does he who has love, hate any. The tree is made manifest by its fruits; so they, who profess themselves to be christians, are known by what they do."

We cannot discover his character and conduct as a bishop, better than by the advice which he gives his beloved brother, co-disciple, and afterwards fellow martyr Polycarp: As a sketch of the tenour of his own temper and walk in that important function, he writes:

"I beseech thee, by the grace of God, with which thou art cloathed, to press forward in thy course, and to exhort all others that they may be saved. Maintain thy place with all care, both of body and spirit: make it thy endeavour to preserve unity, than which nothing is better. Bear with all men, even as the Lord with thee. Support all in love, as also thou dost. Pray

* Speaking and not to be.

without

without ceasing. Ask more understanding than what thou already hast. Be watchful, having thy spirit always awake. Speak with every one according as God shall enable thee. Bear the infirmities of all as a perfect combatant.—If thou shalt love the good disciples, what thanks is it? but rather do thou subject in meekness those that are mischievous. Every wound is not healed by the same plaster: if the accessions of the disease be vehement, mollify them with soft remedies: Be in all things wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove. Be sober as a combatant of God. Let not those that seem worthy of credit, but teach other doctrines, disturb thee. Stand firm and immoveable, as an anvil when it is beaten upon. It is the part of a combatant to be wounded, and yet to overcome.” &c.

Here we may see the picture of Ignatius as a bishop.—He exhorts all the churches to whom he wrote, to love, honour, and obey their bishops, presbyters, and deacons, as highly necessary for their own edification, the maintaining of unity, and preventing the machinations of satan.

He had a foreboding and earnest desire to become a martyr, and wished for nothing more than to seal with his death the truth of the gospel to which he had borne such a loud and convincing testimony for so many years. However, he escaped the storms of the various persecutions under Domitian, although he withstood the raging flood, by supporting and strengthening those who were ready to sink in these times of trial, and such who were not as yet well grounded in the faith.

Though the church at Antioch, and throughout all Syria, certainly rejoiced at his being still left among them as one who fed the church of God which he had purchased with his own blood; and he rejoiced greatly himself, when the persecution abated, at the tranquillity of his church; yet he was troubled as to himself, that he had not been thought worthy to suffer for his Lord, as though he had not attained to a true love of Christ, nor was come up to the pitch of a perfect disciple. Continuing therefore some years longer with his Church, as a faithful and approved shepherd, he at length attained to the summit of his wishes.

Trajan *, in the nineteenth year of his empire, coming from his conquest of the Scythians and Dacians, and many other nations, looked upon it as needful to the rendering his dominion absolute and universal, to subdue the spirit of the christians, and oblige them "to worship the devil, with all other nations." The persecution was renewed; and fear came upon the christians, as they must either sacrifice or die. On this account our valiant soldier of Jesus Christ, being in fear for the church of Antioch, and hoping thereby to avert the storm, was voluntarily brought before Trajan, who was then at Antioch in his way to Armenia and the Parthians against whom he was hastening.

Being come into the presence of Trajan, the emperor said unto him,

What a wicked wretch † art thou, thus to endeavour to transgress our commands, and to persuade others also to do the like, to their destruction?

Ignatius answered: No one ought to call Theophorus after such a manner; forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed far from the servants of God. But if because I am a trouble to those evil spirits, you call me wicked, with reference to them, I confess the charge: For having within me Christ the heavenly King, I dissolve all the snares of those devils.

Trajan replied: And who is Theophorus?

Ign. He who has Christ in his breast.

Traj. And do not we then seem to thee to have the gods within us, who fight for us against our enemies?

Ign. You err in that you call the evil spirits of the heathens gods; for there is but ONE GOD, who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them: And ONE JESUS CHRIST his only begotten Son; whose kingdom may I enjoy!

Traj. His kingdom, you say, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?

Ign. His, who crucified my sin, with the inventor of it, and has put all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry him in their heart.

Traj. Dost thou then carry him that was crucified, within thee?

* The relation of the martyrdom of St. Ignatius. † Or devil.
Ign.

Ign. I do; for it is written, "I will dwell in them and walk in them."

Then Trajan pronounced this sentence against him :

"Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed that he carries about within himself Him that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound by soldiers to Great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts, for the entertainment of the people."

When the holy martyr heard this sentence, he cried out with joy, *I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards Thee, and hast made me to put on iron bonds with thy apostle Paul.*

Having said this, he with joy put on his bonds: and having first prayed for the church, and commended it with tears unto the Lord, he was hurried away, like a choice ram, the leader of a good flock, by the brutish soldiers, in order to his being carried to Rome, there to be devoured by the blood-thirsty beasts.

Many have expressed their surprize, and sought for the reasons which induced the emperor to send this person, loaded with years, such a long and irksome journey, to meet a death which could have been inflicted upon him at Antioch. Whether it was done out of a kind of humanity (for Trajan was in general not inhuman) that he might have time to consider of the terrible death he was to die, and through fear, and, by being harassed by the inconveniencies and afflictions he should be exposed to on the road, he might be induced to renounce the faith, and to sacrifice to idols; by which means also Trajan would have obtained a complete victory, and be enabled to lead in triumph, to the temples of the idols, a man, a bishop, who had been so many years one of the brightest ornaments and a pillar of the church. Or whether, as it is said, he was advised by the senate to pass this sentence, lest, by his being put to death at Antioch, he should be rendered still dearer to the people there. Whatever may have been the reason, there seems evidently a hand of divine providence in it, as he became a living witness and striking monument of the grace and salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ wherever he came; encouraging the bishops and ministers, and giving the most lively exhortations, and administering

ministering consolation to the churches, not only to those through which he passed, but by his epistles to those round about. By this means we have also a specimen and taste of the spirit of that period of the church.

He left Antioch, and entered upon his journey with joy, and greatly desirous to suffer, and came to Seleucia; sailing from thence, after great fatigue, he arrived at Smyrna; where, leaving the ship, he hastened to see Polycarp, his fellow scholar, who was bishop there. For in the *relation of his martyrdom*, it is added, "They had both of them been formerly the disciples of St. John."

His joy was great to meet again and converse with his beloved Polycarp, which appears from what he writes to Polycarp, after their interview, from Troas: "I exceedingly give thanks that I have been thought worthy to behold thy blessed * face, in which may I always rejoice in God! In this meeting, it is said that Ignatius "communicated some spiritual gifts to Polycarp and gloried in his bonds." He also, in his epistle to Polycarp, seems to intimate to him, that he (Polycarp) should attain to the crown of martyrdom, by telling him, "That he also should be a combatant of God:" the crown proposed to him being immortality and eternal life; and adds, "Concerning which thou art also fully persuaded. I will be thy surety in all things, and my bonds, which thou hast loved."

The great esteem in which he was held by the churches was such, that they sent deputies from the churches and cities in Asia, to attend and comfort him, and to receive some advantages by his communicating unto them those gifts of grace which he partook of in such an abundant measure. And we find this deputation was of such a nature, that the churches are said to have attended him by their bishops, and priests, and deacons. Of those with him at Smyrna, we find the following expressly mentioned in his epistles: "Onesimus, bishop of Ephesus," touching whom he writes to the Ephesians, "who by inexpressible love is ours;" and styles him "an excellent bishop."

Damas, bishop of Magnesia, concerning whom he exhorts the Magnesians "not to use him too familiarly on account of his youth, but to yield all reverence to

him; as I perceive (adds he) that your holy presbyters^s do, not considering his age *, which is indeed young, but as becomes those who are prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not unto him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the bishop of us all." Polycarpus bishop of Tralles, of whom he writes to the Trallians, "In effect I saw your whole church in him. I seemed to find you, as also I knew that ye were the followers of God." And again, "I have received and even now have with me the pattern of your love in your bishop; whose very look is instructive, and whose mildness powerful; whom I am persuaded, the very atheists themselves cannot but reverence:" so that beside himself and Polycarp, these bishops are mentioned by him as being with him at Smyrna. Of presbyters, we find the following mentioned, Bassus and Apollonius of Magnesia; and of deacons, Burrhus, Epulus, and Fronto of Smyrna, Ephesus and Sotio of Magnesia, besides the presbyters and deacons of Smyrna, and probably from other churches, whose names are not mentioned. Indeed it seems, by what is written, as if there was a general convocation of the churches in Asia; and we may suppose that there were some even from Rome, as we find he writes his epistle from thence to the Romans with the direct intention to prevent their taking any steps to hinder the execution of Trajan's sentence. Moreover he writes to the Romans, "There is now with me Crocus, most beloved of me. As for those which are come from Syria, and are gone before me to Rome to the glory of God, I suppose you are not ignorant of them."

We must still add to the number of those with him at Smyrna, Philo, the deacon of Cilicia, of whom he says in his epistle from Troas to the Philadelphians, that he was "a most worthy man; he still ministers unto me in the word of God, together with Rheus of Agathopolis, a singular good person, who has followed me from Syria, not regarding his life." He also mentions them honourably in his epistle to the Smyrnæans. These two seem to have been his constant companions and attendants on this his uncouth pilgrimage, and even to his death.

* Seeming youthful state.

In this assembly of the bishops, presbyters, deacons, and brethren from so many churches, he first of all intreated the whole church, but more particularly Polycarp, to contend with God in his behalf, that, being suddenly taken by the beasts from the world, he might appear before the face of Christ. We may naturally suppose that he then recommended to Polycarp and to the assembly, that they would take care of his church, and see that it was provided with a worthy successor. This was evidently a subject of their conference, as he urges it in all his epistles. He writes from Troas to Polycarp as follows: "It will be very fit, O most worthy Polycarp, to call a select council, and chuse some one whom ye particularly love, and who is patient of labour, that he may be the messenger of God; and that, going to Syria, he may glorify your incessant love to the praise of Christ. A christian has not the power of himself, but must always be at leisure for God's service. Now this work is both God's and yours, when ye shall have perfected it." In his letters to the other churches, he desires them to send delegates from thence to Antioch on the one hand to comfort, and on the other to congratulate his flock on account of the abatement of the persecution of which he had heard on the way. to his great joy; and he requests Polycarp to write to the same effect to those churches to which he himself could not write.

Thus, with a terrible death in view, and to which he was hastening, in the midst of all the distressing circumstances attending his irksome journey, and his being hurried and seized by his savage guards; yea and in the enjoyment of the love of his brethren, he could not forget his dearly beloved flock, which not man, but God, had committed to his charge. We must also conclude, that they conferred about the state of all the churches, as he seems, by his epistles to those to whom he could write, to have a thorough knowledge of their state by the advice he gave unto them: Then he opened unto them the dangers to which they were exposed, and the hour of temptation approaching unto them. And finally, he was not "wanting in returning a recompence to the churches who came to meet him by their governors; and

and he sent letters of thanks to them, which distilled spiritual grace, with prayer and exhortation."

From Smyrna he wrote epistles to the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome.—It has been already observed, that his epistle to the Romans was evidently written with a view to dissuade them from attempting to rescue him from the jaws of the lions; but to shew how much he was convinced that it was fitting that he should seal the truth, in which he had enjoyed the most solid happiness, by his death, and how ardently he wished for the crown of martyrdom, we will quote his own expostulations to the Romans:

"I hope ere long to salute you, if it be the will of God to grant me to attain unto the end I long for. For the beginning is well disposed, if I shall but have grace without hindrance to receive what * is appointed for me. But I fear your love, lest it do me an injury. For it is easy for you to do what you please; but it will be hard for me to attain unto God, if you spare me. I shall never hereafter have such an opportunity of attaining unto God. If you should be silent in my behalf, I shall be made partaker of God: But if you shall love my body, I shall have my course again to run. Wherefore ye cannot do me a greater kindness than to suffer me to be sacrificed unto God, now that the altar is already prepared: that when ye are gathered together in love, ye may give thanks to the Father through Jesus Christ; that he has vouchsafed to bring a bishop of Syria unto you, being called from the east to the west. For it is good for me to set from the world, that I may rise again unto Him.

Ye have never envied any one. Only pray for me, that God would give me both outward and inward strength. Nothing is good that is seen. For even our God Jesus, now that he is in the Father, does so much the more appear. I write to the churches, and signify to them all, that I am willing to die for God, unless you hinder me. I beseech that you shew not an unreasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to be food to the beasts, by whom I shall attain unto God. For I am the wheat of God, and shall be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread

* My lot.

of Christ. Rather encourage the beasts, that they may become my sepulchre: then shall I be truly the disciple of Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body. Pray therefore unto Christ for me, that by these instruments I may be made a sacrifice to God. I do not, as Peter and Paul, command you. They were apostles, I a condemned man. They were free, but I am even to this day a servant. But if I shall suffer, I shall then become the freeman of Jesus Christ, and shall rise free*. And now, being in bonds, I learn not to desire any thing †."

"All the ends of the world, and the kingdoms of it, will profit me nothing: I would rather die for Jesus Christ, than rule to the utmost ends of the earth. Him I seek, who died for us. Him I desire, that rose again for us. This is the gain that is laid up for me.

Pardon me, my brethren; ye shall not hinder me from living: nor, seeing I desire to go to God, may you separate me from him for the sake of this world, nor seduce me by any of the desires of it. Suffer me to enter into pure light; where, being come, I shall be indeed the servant of God. Permit me to imitate the passion of my God. If any one has Him within himself, let him consider what I desire, and let him have compassion on me, as knowing || how I am straitened.

The prince of this world would fain carry me away, and corrupt my resolution towards my God. Let none of you therefore help him: rather do ye join with me, that is, with God. Though I am alive at the writing of this, yet my desire is to die. My love is crucified; and there is not any fire within me that loves matter, but living and speaking water saying within me, Come to the Father. I take no pleasure in the food of corruption, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ; and the drink that I long for is his blood, which is incorruptible love ¶.

I have no desire to live any longer after the manner of men; neither shall I, if you consent. Be ye therefore willing, that ye yourselves also may be pleasing to God. I exhort you in a few words. I pray you believe me. Je-

* Free in him. † Worldly or vain things. || What constrains me. ¶ And perpetual life.

Jesus Christ will shew you that I speak truly. My mouth is without deceit, and the Father truly hath spoken by it. Pray therefore for me, that I may accomplish what I desire. If I shall suffer, ye have loved me ; but if I shall be rejected, ye have hated me."

It is probable, that the Romans had represented to him the terrors of the death that was prepared for him, with a view to obtain his consent, that they might persuade the people not to desire his being brought forth to be devoured by the beasts, as he writes so strongly upon this subject : " May I enjoy the wild beasts that are prepared for me ; which also I wish may exercise all their fierceness upon me ; and whom for that end I will encourage, that they may be sure to devour me, and not serve me as they have done some, whom out of fear they have not touched. But if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it. Pardon me in this matter ; I know what is profitable for me. Now I begin to be a disciple ; nor shall any thing move me, whether visible or invisible, that I may attain to Christ Jesus. Let fire, and the cross ; let the companies of wild beasts, let breakings of bones, and tearing of members ; let the shattering in pieces of the whole body, and all the wicked torments of the devil come upon me ; only let me enjoy Jesus Christ."

Having employed the time he was allowed to spend in Smyrna, in the most useful and edifying manner, and, as the *relation of his martyrdom* tells us, " having thus strengthened such of the brethren at Rome as were against his martyrdom, by this epistle, as he desired ; setting sail from Smyrna (for he was pressed by the soldiers to hasten to the public spectacles at Great Rome, that, being delivered to the wild beasts in sight of the Roman people, he might receive the crown for which he strove) he came to Troas."

We find that the churches of Smyrna and Ephesus, out of their great love and esteem for him, sent one to attend him to Troas, as he writes to the church at Philadelphia, " The love of the brethren that are at Troas salutes you : from whence also I now write by Burrhus (Polycarp's own deacon) who was sent together with me by those of Ephesus and Smyrna for respect's sake."

He must have made some stay at Troas, as from thence he wrote letters to Polycarp, to the Philadelphians, and Smyræans.

He was constantly met on the road, as far as the knowledge of his route could reach, by messengers from the neighbouring churches; of this he makes mention to the Romans: "My spirit salutes you, and the love of the churches that have received me in the name of Jesus Christ, not as a passenger; for even they that were not near to me in the way, have gone before me to the next city to meet me."

Of his journey from Troas to Rome, we have the following account in *the relation of his martyrdom*:

"From whence (*Troas*) going on, being brought to Neapolis, he passed by Philippi, through Macedonia and that part of Epirus which is next to Epidamus; having found a ship in one of the sea-ports, he sailed over the Adriatic sea; and from thence entering into the Tyrrhene, and passing by several islands and cities, at length he saw Puteoli, which being shewed to the holy man, he hastened to go forth, being desirous to walk from thence, in the way that Paul the apostle had gone: but a violent wind arising, and driving on the ship, would not suffer him so to do: wherefore, commending the love of the brethren in that place, he sailed forward. And the wind continuing favourable to us, in one day and a night we indeed were unwillingly hurried on, as sorrowing to think of being separated from this holy martyr: But to him it happened just according to his wish, that he might go sooner out of the world, and attain unto the Lord whom he loved. Wherefore, sailing into the Roman port, and those impure sports being at an end, the soldiers began to be offended at his slowness; but the bishop with great joy complied with their hastiness."

Having brought Ignatius thus far towards the end of his journey, and the attainment of his highest wishes, we cannot but observe, that he seems to have been led by the hand of God this long and tedious way, that he might be a monument of the power of grace to the churches through which he passed, and a proof that he did not bear the name of Theophorus in vain, but that
Christ

Christ was in him the hope of glory, and the principle of action. Thus his occupation on the way, was to shew to unbelievers what the redemption in the blood of Christ, when sealed by the Spirit, produces in the human heart, and brings forth in the walk and conversation, even under the severest trials, and to encourage and strengthen the zeal and faith of the churches. That all desired to have some testimonies of his walk and conversation, is evident, as Polycarp in his epistle to the Philippians writes, "What you know of Ignatius, and those that are with him, signify unto us." And Polycarp, by Ignatius's own desire, and by the desire of the Philippians and other churches, sent to them Ignatius's epistles, "together with what others of his were come to his hands."

The length and various difficulties of this journey must have been very trying to him, when we consider his great age, being upwards of eighty, his being in bonds, and subject to rude heathenish soldiers, unaccustomed to humanity. As to his bonds, instead of murmuring on their account, he prized them highly as most costly ornaments, or, as he calls them, "spiritual jewels."

As to the treatment which he received from his keepers, we can have no better account than that which he himself gives of it: He writes to the Romans from Syria, even unto Rome, "I fight with beasts both by sea and land, both night and day; being bound to ten leopards, that is to say, to such a band of soldiers, who, though treated with all manner of kindness, are the worse for it." But he adds, "I am the more instructed by their injuries, yet am I not therefore justified."

The writers of the *relation of his martyrdom* proceed as follows:

"Being soon forced away from the Port, so called, we forthwith met the brethren from Rome (for the report of what concerned the holy martyr was spread abroad) who were full of fear and joy; for they rejoiced in that God had vouchsafed them the company of Theophorus, but were afraid when they considered that such a one was brought thither to die. Now some of these he commanded to hold their peace, who were the most zealous for his safety, and said, *that they would appease*

the people, that they should not desire the destruction of the just. He presently knowing this by the Spirit, and saluting all of them, desired that they would shew a true love to him, disputing yet more with them than he had done in his epistle, and persuading them not to envy him who was hastening unto the Lord."

This controversy of love and zeal between the aged and fatigued bishop, and the loving and tenderly affected Roman brethren, must have been very moving, and was probably the hardest trial that Ignatius met with on his whole journey. That he overcame what he regarded as a mistaken effect of their love, is a proof of the ardour of heart and burning zeal of the brethren in those days of genuine christianity, as likewise the readiness to submit, even in the most tender and delicate point, to the desire of this ancient servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. When he had gained his point, we are told, "All the brethren kneeling down, he prayed to the Son of God in behalf of the churches, that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the brethren towards each other. Which being done, he was with all haste led into the amphitheatre, and speedily, according to the command of Cæsar before given, thrown in, the end of the spectacles being at hand: for it was then a very solemn day, called in the Roman tongue the xiiiith of the Calends of January*, upon which the people were more than ordinarily want to be gathered together.

"Thus was he delivered to the cruel beasts, near the temple, by wicked men; that so the desire of the holy martyr Ignatius might be accomplished, as it is written, *The desire of the righteous is acceptable †.*"

It appears that the beasts did their work so effectually, that they left but a few fragments of his body, only the greater and harder parts of his bones remained; which were carried to Antioch.

Thus Ignatius obtained his wish, and shewed more true heroism, wisdom and fortitude, as it proceeded from unfeigned and ardent love to his gracious Lord and Saviour, and a joyful and assured hope of a blessed immor-

* 10th day of December. Sura and Synecius were consuls.

† Prov. x. 24.

tality in the presence of his God who died for his sins, than Trajan in all his conquests.

In the *relation of his martyrdom* it is further said, "that some of the brethren being together watching and praying with tears unto God, to shew them what had been done, they had particular displays of the blessedness of Ignatius."

The year in which he suffered martyrdom is not positively ascertained; but this is plain, that it was between the years of our Lord 107 and 116.

The writers of the *relation of his martyrdom* declare, that they were eye-witnesses; and conclude it by saying "We have made known to you both the day and time; that being assembled together, according to the time of his martyrdom, we may communicate with the combatant and most valiant martyr of Christ, who trod under foot the devil, and perfected the course he had piously desired, in Christ Jesus our Lord; by whom, and with whom, all glory and power be to the Father, with the blessed Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen."

His memory was dear to the churches, and he was pointed out by Polycarp, in his epistle to the Philippians, as an example unto them. He writes, "I exhort all of you that ye obey the word of righteousness, and exercise all patience; which ye have seen set before your eyes, not only in the blessed Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus, but in others among yourselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the apostles; for they loved not this present world, but him who died, and was raised again by God for us."

Some Account of POLYCARP.

As Polycarp is so often mentioned, and is a principal character in the Tragedy which gave occasion to this account of Ignatius, we will say a few words of him also.

HE was born in the east, and was sold in his childhood to a certain noble matron, whose name was Calisto, bred up by her, and at her death made heir to all her estate, which, though very considerable, he soon spent in works of love and mercy.

He received his christianity from Bucolus, bishop of Smyrna, by whom he was made deacon and catechist of that church; and having discharged those offices with universal approbation, he was, after the decease of Bucolus, made bishop by the apostles, and particularly by St. John, whose disciple he had been with Ignatius.

His character in his function was great; and so well known, that his enemies, before his death, cried out, that he should be thrown to the lions, saying, "*This is the doctor of Asia, the father of the christians, and the overthrower of our gods.*" And when he was burnt, they persuaded the governor not to let his friends carry away any of his remains, *Lest*, said they, *the christians forsaking him that was crucified, should begin to worship Polycarp.* He was greatly esteemed throughout all Asia, and was called the prince and the ruler of Asia, and his influence extended even to Rome.

Though both Ignatius and Polycarp foresaw that the latter should also suffer martyrdom, yet he continued many years after Ignatius's death at the head of his church, till, according to the most probable accounts, he also obtained the martyr's crown, in the year of our Lord 147, under the reign of Antoninus Pius, when persecution raged, and many christians were thrown to the wild beasts. But when the beasts would not seize and devour Gemnicus, though he provoked them to it, the multitude cried out, *Take away those wicked wretches, let Polycarp*

carp be looked out. When Polycarp heard that he was called for, he resolved to stay in the city; but being persecuted, he at length departed to a village not far off, where he staid some time in prayer. Hearing that his pursuers were near at hand, he withdrew to another village, where he was found, being betrayed: he might have escaped, but would not, saying, *The will of the Lord be done.* His conduct had such an effect, that some of the soldiers began to repent. The guards setting him on an ass, brought him into the city, being on the Great sabbath*. Herod the chief officer met him, and taking him into his chariot, persuaded him, saying, *What harm is there in saying, Lord Cæsar, and sacrifice, and so be safe, &c.?* But he not being to be moved, they threw him violently out of the chariot, and hurt his thigh; however, he went on briskly, as though not hurt, and was brought to the lists. The proconsul took much pains to persuade him to reproach Christ: But Polycarp answered, *Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong: how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?* Much more was said and replied. At length he was committed to the flames, and received the crown of his martyrdom on the 26th of March, being the Great Sabbath, in the year 147, and near 40 years after the death of Ignatius.

* The Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

IGNATIUS, Bishop of Antioch, surnamed Theophorus.

AGATHOPUS, } Deacons.
PHILO, }

TRAJAN, the Roman Emperor.

POLYCARP, Bishop of Smyrna.

ONESYMUS, } Messengers of the Churches.
POLYBIUS, }
DAMAS, }

ROMAN CHRISTIANS.

TWO PHILOSOPHERS.

CLAUDIUS, a Soldier.

Other SOLDIERS.

DIRCE, Deaconess of Antioch.

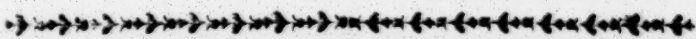
CATECHUMENS. PENITENTS.



I G N A T I U S:

A

T R A G E D Y.



A C T I. S C E N E I.

S C E N E A N T I O C H.

An open place before Ignatius's door.

P H I L O. A G A T H O P U S.

THOU know'st, Agathopus, what threats of late
Trajan has breath'd against the christian name :
Death is their doom, who shall refuse the worship
And rites appointed of the Gentile gods.
Thus he pronounc'd, when warm with Scythian con-
quests.

Impetuous still from that campaign, he's now
At Antioch. But 'tis casual impulse guides
The mind of man : His new exploit of arms
(For now he looks to Parthia) may take up
His total fervour, nor permit to fall
This nearest thunder hanging o'er our heads.
By this, or some diviner bar, can God
Ev'n yet between his helpless servants stand
And the black day——

A G A. A glorious day, O Philo,
When persecution low'rs ! I call it sun-shine, Which

Which quickens the dull bosom of the church
 To bold productions and a bloom of virtues.
 Yes, such a worthy juncture I much long for,
 When christian zeal benumb'd and dead thro' ease,
 Glows with young life, feels the more copious flow
 Of ghostly aids; and, as the dangers rise,
 Heig'ntens its pulse and fills up all its greatness.
 Then is the time of crowns; of grants profuse
 (Compleat remission, open Paradise;
 With power to intercede for common souls)
 To gen'rous motives of intenser duty,
 Which while the sufferer sees, serene and glad
 He thanks the impious hand that help'd him forward.

PHI. Ev'n there methinks there's something to
 deject me.

Must I obtain my glory by the guilt
 Of other men, of no less lovely make
 Original, and offspring of one God!
 This thought may damp whom death itself invites;
 Besides, I with not trials, since I know not
 Who then shall stand.

AGA. Whoever loves his Lord!

Whoever hath contemplated the cross,
 And felt the death of Christ thro' all its meaning;
 Thro' all its benefits, thro' all its charms.
 He, reconcil'd to pain and far remov'd
 From this world's foreign false felicities,
 Carries devoted blood, which, more than ready,
 Pants to be spilt upon its Master's grave.
 The hypocrite will shrink: but highly welcome
 That edge of danger which pares off such members.

PHI. I think the love of Christ need not imply
 Such blunt importunate desire of death.

AGA. Recall th' unworthy thought! and search thy
 heart,

My Philo; for I fear these sober minds
 Have worldly lusts at bottom. Haply some
 And pop'lar favour make thy lot too sweet?

PHI. I own 'tis sweet to love and to be lov'd
 By all Christ's people; it may richly comfort
 This mortal state; and could it rise so high,
 That from this source irregular attachment
 To life should spring, I'd argue back, and say,

'Twas

'Twas not irregular, for here 'twas heaven.
Fame, if it shone, my frailties keep me cool.

AGA. Does not the specious luxury detain thee
Of worldly peace and soft unruffled ease?

PHI. No: I still see all my concerns below
Hang by a dubious thread. Am I call'd forth
To action or to suff'ring, I can meet
From no enervate rest the stronger shakings
Of this rough world.

AGA. Once more; perhaps the cause
Is woman; powerful to bring back to earth
Ev'n tow'ring souls, and kindle up afresh
The light, the taste, the system of old nature.

PHI. In vain you seek the cause, my jealous friend,
Why I love life. A thing you little guess
How far I am from loving! Who indeed
Whose soul has any fire can take delight
In such a blind existence; which ties down
These seraph minds t' attend a dull machine,
To feed and doze, rejoice and fret the same
With animals? which now by sanguine hope,
Ideas gay, illuminates all o'er
The cred'lous heart; and then with strange surmise
And grief mysterious so envelops all,
That wisdom doubts, tho' 'tis indeed one thing,
Or to despise, or use, and balance both.
I have so little footing in this life
Firm to my thoughts, that it could not support me
To live out one day more, did I not look
To reasons in the depths of providence;
For I must own, Agathopus, I think,
These things are not in vain: Our Maker's hand
Hath plac'd some virtue in this earthly process
To work us in the end surprising good.

AGA. O Philo, from the cross of Christ alone
Derive thy good! His church is a new world,
Where all thy fate and all thy business lie.
And since thou'rt cold about a speedy passage
Into thy Master's joy I must at least
Question thy christian hope. Feel'st thou the pledge
Of blessed resurrection? Does thy heart
Within thee leap to meet the last great scenes?

PHIL.

PHI. Tho' well persuaded that these sins of mine,
Incumbrances so massy to the zeal
Of a whole mortal life, will ne'er resist
When the great Father shall one day shine forth,
Restoring exil'd man; yet scarce I dare
Connect myself and glory in one thought.
I do but cast me in the croud of beings
On God's broad mercy, as a mighty tide
Bearing it's peevish offspring safe to harbour.

AGA. I understand thee, Philo; and may't thou
Now understand how far below the gospel
Thy soul consents to dwell. The friends of Christ
Don't strive with sin but trample under foot
It's poor exploded antiquated strength.
They don't rely on some benign event
From the wide wheel of things, but pierce directly
Where Jesus now admits them, and ordains
Their thrones in bliss: Hence they in spirit stand,
Free from all spot, amidst the train of heaven,
And see God's face, whose full and constant smile
Doth so attend them thro' the wilds of life,
That natural dejection, flitting fears
And all vicissitude is swallow'd up
In one still dawn of that eternal day—
But see the rev'rend bishop coming forth.

Enter I G N A T I U S.

IGN. I hope, my sons, at this important season
No idle talk employ'd you: Learn betimes
With tender sense to bear the church's burden.
But I must praise the place where you have chose
Your morning stand. For hence we look around
And see so many roofs, where pray'r incessant
With mighty thoughts of heart and fervent faith,
Is offer'd up to heaven. Hear Thou, my Lord,
Thy people's voice, and give them peace this day!

AGA. Our meditations, father, were the same
With yours, about th' impending persecution.

IGNA. And don't you think it strange, Agathopus,
And Philo, ministers and witnesses

Of the mere love and innocent meek life
Of christians, that they should be hated thus ?

AG A. The laws of Christ condemn a vicious world,
And gall it to revenge.

IGNA. Tho' that be true,
Yet still our human foes are chiefly found
Poor instruments t' exert a foreign malice,
Whose depth and horror is beyond the heart
Of silly flesh and blood. That ancient rival
Of God's dear Son pursues the potentate
In us his subjects, and retains the nations
With all th' enchanting sweet and pow'r of evil,
To form his wretched pomp and fight his war.
When heathen hosts attack'd of old the race
Of chosen Israel, 'twas in truth a siege
Sustain'd by Jesus in his little fort
From the dark legions. Then the outstretch'd arm,
But now, the cross must conquer. Tell me therefore
As in your ministries you have observ'd,
How would my flock receive that bitter cup.

PHI. Firm in the faith.

AG A. Ardent for martyrdom !
Yesterday convey'd to a poor man
His dole of public alms : " Give me," said he,
" But one day's bread ; I hope to want no more."
Husband and wife and other friends take leave
Each time they're call'd from one another's sight,
As not to meet till in the world of spirits.
When at their work, " Fulfil your task," they cry,
" Poor hands, this drudgery will soon be o'er !"
At meals is scripture read ! They seem to need
No *earthly food* : Is resurrection nam'd ?
They loath it. Children now intelligent
Above their years, mark all their father says,
Look in his face and cry, " Shan't we die too ?"
The father in the slumbers of the night
Sees a bright angel wave him to the tortures ;
He cries, " I come !" And when he wakes, he finds
His spirit half loosen'd from his mortal prison.
The women now think of no ornaments
But shackles : Every bosom, weak before,
For the grand trial a big soul reserves.

D

Already

Already to the lot of martyrs rais'd
All see each other. Ev'ry face more shining
And more august each little threshold seems.

IGNA. I'm glad my people are so well prepar'd.
But I've a secret hope, that providence
Means not so much : The blow of persecution
May light indeed, but yet stop short of them.
Trajanus is accounted far from cruel,
Most gentle in the gen'ral and humane :
Perhaps it will content him to chastise
Numbers in one. How joyfully should I
Buy the flock's safety with my single danger!
But come, Agathopus, our holy books
Must be hid somewhere, for they shall not die.

[*Exeunt Ignat. & Agath.*]

PHI. Reversing thy proposal, O Ignatius,
How many lives in Antioch would redeem
Thy single breath! But heav'n's great law (we own)
Pleads on thy side : which loves to snatch away
The tallest faint, and force his raw dependents,
Forsaken branches, to strike root themselves.

[*Noise without.*]

I know that noise ; it is the Emperor's chariot :
He fails not daily on a plain hard by
To exercise his soldiers. He went out
This morning with the dawn. O let him teach
Us to be wise, and wage a better warfare,
With vigilance as earnest and unweary'd !
But how is this ? Here's part of his retinue
Bending this way. I'll stand aside and watch them.

Enter SOLDIERS.

First SOL. What should these christians be ? Me-
thinks for once
I'd see what passes in their meeting.

Second SOL.

Fool,

Their meeting's in the dark, where they commit
Adultery and quaff the blood of infants.

First SOL. I cannot think so : They are simple
people,
Given to fancies, but of no ill meaning.

Second

Second Sol. Why then should our wise Emp'r or be
so bent

Against them? As he drove thro' yonder gate,
He cast his eye this way. "O here," says he,
"In these back lanes and forlorn skirts of Antioch,
"The new sect chiefly dwell. In vain do we
"Give laws to nations, if the dregs of men
"May thus outbrave us. Tho' to-day we march
"Onwards to Parthia, I must crush this evil
"Before I stir. Some of you instantly
"The christian bishop seek and bring him to us."

Third Sol. But now 'tis time to ask which is his
door?

And see, here's one can tell us: Friend, where lives
Ignatius?

Phi. There, the house is just before you.
[*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

Good Shepherd! soon his wish was heard. O Lord,
Grant him thy strength, and guide what now ensues.
[*Exit.*]



S C E N E II.

SCENE changes to a Room of State.

*TRAJAN seated and attended. IGNATIUS brought
in by the Soldiers.*

Tra. What art thou, Wretch! push'd on by thy
ill genius,
Not only to oppose my will, nor own
The gods of Rome, but other simple souls
Inveigle to their ruin?

Ign. Noble Emperor,
I bear (and not in vain, thro' grace divine)
A name of better import than to be
Or wretched or demoniac. No, the man
Who is Theophorus can ne'er want joy,
Is rais'd above the reach of misery.

Is freed from dæmons pow'r? nor only freed,
But able to controul and scourge the foe.
As I with ease their ev'ry snare dissolve,
Sustain'd by Christ the heavenly King.

TRA.

Explain,

What mean'st thou by the name Theophorus?

IGNA. 'Tis he, whose soul is ever full of God,

'Tis he who carries Christ within his breast.

TRA. And think'st thou that in us no gods reside,
Enjoying as we do their aid in battle?

IGNA. Whom you call gods, and misinform'd adore,
Are dæmons of the nations. One alone

True God there is, who made the earth and sky

And all things in them? and one Jesus Christ,

Son of his love, whose kingdom be my portion!

TRA. Thou mean'st the same whom Pilate crucify'd?

IGNA. Him I do mean who crucify'd my sin,

Together with it's author? and subdued

The realm of darkness (gladly I repeat

What I on this occasion prove and feel)

Under their feet who carry him in heart.

TRA. So then the Crucify'd lives yet in thee?

IGNA. He does? for thus the gracious promise runs,
"In them I'll walk and in their hearts I'll dwell."

TRA. Thus, therefore, I conclude: Since this fond
man

Affirms with frantic phrase, that still in him

The Crim'nal lives, whom to the cross we doom'd,

Let him be carried to Imperial Rome,

And, worry'd by wild beasts, divert the people.

Ten of our soldiers guard him; and just now

Put on his chains. We'll haste to higher cares

From quell'd opinions pass to conquer lands.

They put on IGNATIUS's Chains.

[Exit TRAJAN.]

IGNA. Pursue thy glory, Trajan; I of mine

Am now possess'd: Thanks to my gracious Lord

That for his love and faith in his firm word

I'm bound in irons with the great St. Paul,

Am call'd to sufferings, and can blest the call!



A C T II.

S C E N E I.

SCENE the Christians Place of religious Assemblies.

The People coming in at the lower End of the Place.

AGATHOPUS. PHILO.

AGATHOPUS.

HOW happy is our office, thus to stand
 And serve the brotherhood? dispatch th' affairs,
 And by a nearer view admire the graces,
 Peculiar sentiments, and varied virtue
 Of thousand lovely souls all taught of God!
 Nay, ev'n so often to tell over names
 And faces mark'd for glory, gives a pleasure,
 Like that wherewith the prophet's angel once
 Shall pass along, sealing the sons of light.

PHI. I sadly mourn those few whose lapse and
 frailty
 Hath raz'd them from our list; but real seems
 Their penitence, tho' scarce fulfil'd it's period:
 Shall we propose them to the bishop's mercy †?

AGA. Yes, at this time, for persecution's hour.
 The canon supersedes. Now guilty souls,
 Releas'd from other discipline, have leave
 To purge their sins in blood; and blushing bear
 The rank of faithful with them to the dead.
 Now also the young hearts of catechumens

† In the primitive church the times of separation from the church was shortened to those who had fallen under censure, by the recommendations of confessors, or those going to suffer martyrdom.

Should be admitted to the christian voyage ;
 Whose course, soon finish'd, may perhaps ne'er know
 That gradual conflux of temptations waves
 Which meets and shakes our common perseverance.
 But where is Dirce ? We must speak with her.

PHI. Yonder she is.

AGA. Then beckon to her, Philo.

(PHILO beckons, and DIRCE comes up to them.)

AGA. My sister, this is the last time you'll see
 Our gentle bishop ; therefore now consider
 If there be any soul under your hand
 That he may be of use to.

DIR. The good bishop
 Is useful like the day, a gen'ral guide
 And comfort to us in our sev'ral paths ;
 But otherwise, there's none within my charge
 Wants any more partic'lar ray of light.

AGA. None prone to sadness, or perplex with
 doubts ?

DIR. That case I own is frequent in our sex,
 From tenderness of frame, and more sincere
 And close attention to religious cares.
 But all at present walk in such strong works,
 And fervent darings of exerted zeal,
 That there's no room for scruples or for clouds
 To gather on the soul. Each softest mind
 Stands now above its usual lets and fears
 As in another region ; and collected
 Into itself, secure of Christ within,
 Darts with a bolder motion thro' this life,
 Nor needs the friend, and breaks thro' ev'ry foe.

PHI. This is a pastor's joy, when his whole flock
 So full of Christ, use him for order's sake
 As if they us'd him not. But what's become
 Of the design'd espousals of Maria,
 For learning fam'd, and by Ignatius deem'd
 Pattern of female virtues, with the brother
 Approv'd of by her ?

DIR. At this awful time,
 When both so soon above mortality
 May be with Christ, they drop with joint consent
 Such thoughts, though holy, nor unworthy those

Who

Who love the Lord no less, but at more distance
 Wait to put on the privilege of angels.
 Maria now breathes her devoted heart
 In pray'r; is far superior to poor hopes
 From ought beneath the skies. Yet as she saw
 Worth in that brother, and the grace of Christ
 Bright'ning his soul, she does not still disdain
 The thought of meeting him among blest myriads
 With some peculiar and immortal friendship.

AG. My Dirce, thou hast been for sev'ral years
 A faithful leader of the lambs of Christ;
 And many souls by thy maternal voice,
 In the hard conflict and the wav'ring hour,
 Have took the courage to cast off this world:
 Thou may'st expect, if any female blood
 Is shed, it will be thine.

DIR. Welcome the day!
 I think I have some blood about my heart,
 Tho' cold and wither'd in this outward frame,
 That would not shun to be pour'd out for Jesus.

PHI. Behold the people in great numbers present.

AG. I'll speak to them.—My brethren and my
 sisters.
 To your respective places. You shall hear
 Once more the good Ignatius. With much pain
 He has the guard's consent—O! here he is.

Enter IGNATIUS, guarded by the Soldiers.

IGN. I thank you for your gentleness, my keepers!
 My speech is first to you, and if there's here
 Any beside a stranger to our faith.
 Here 'tis we meet; and you shall hear our doctrine,
 Which, as you truly say, is mostly taught
 In corners. But this secrecy, not guilt,
 But meekness that would not offend, persuades.
 Our holy purpose and our pure assembly
 Fears not the light, but asks a fuller light
 Than this weak world can see by. That great day
 Which is reveal'd in fire, and in the blaze
 Of highest truth and reason, shall approve
 What we poor worms have acted in this place.

And

And angels, who are fixt attendants here,
 When they report in language of their world,
 The hymn, the pray'r, the fellowship of saints,
 It sounds nor crime nor folly. True it is,
 We differ somewhat in our form of life
 From other men. And singularity,
 If needless and fantastick, has no comfort
 When public hatred frowns. Nor would that scheme
 Deserve the stress of suff'ring zeal, whose worth
 Lay in fine notions; but could not relieve
 With real strength the lab'ring heart, nor alter,
 By operation deep, our wretched being.
 But if by seal of God and true experience
 Of some few happy souls a doctrine stands
 Commended, as the medicine of our nature,
 Which ev'ry seed of woe subdues within;
 Then, sure, amidst the anger of sick minds,
 Amidst all dangers of the friendly teacher,
 It must be taught. And such is our religion,
 Great in itself by solid gifts of grace;
 It's lovely secret healthful to mankind.
 This we hold forth, couch'd under decent rites,
 Which, while you look upon as singular,
 Are us'd with social heart. For thus we think,
 You now idolaters do darkly mean
 The God we serve, and will with vast relentings
 Discover him at last.—

SOL.

Old man forbear!

You've liberty to speak, but not disparage
 The Emperor's religion.

IGN.

Now to you,

Belov'd in Christ, I turn. I have asserted
 What you'll attest, that as by proper laws
 And many special customs we are sever'd
 A chosen body from the world about us;
 So the distinction well is justified
 By inward graces and peculiar bliss
 Within this body felt. Are there not here
 Men who can say, in soberness and truth,
 That guilt is done away, and innocence
 Fearless and free restor'd within their breasts?
 That vice with dark inextricable bands

No

No more detains, nor drives to acts of shame
 The blushing, reasoning, reluctant mind ?
 That for the passions which by turns inspire
 The worthless life of nature, anger, sloth,
 And avarice, and pride, pure love prevails,
 Kindled by heaven, nor by a bad world quench'd ?
 That they have inwardly exchang'd their climate,
 And pass'd from death to life ; so that their heart,
 Heal'd and exulting from it's deep recess
 Returns this answer : That the pow'r of evil,
 The sting of pain, and terrors of the grave,
 Are now no more ; or but at distance rage
 In faithless minds ; while not a dart can reach
 Their citadel of peace in Jesu's love.
 That they, in short, to God's paternal face
 And firm affection can appeal and look,
 Nor earthly griefs dare intercept the prospect ;
 But still to every want they feel as men,
 To every priestly charitable pray'r
 They breathe as saints of God ; his ear and pow'r
 Are nigh : till thus, by constant use and proof
 Of aid cœlestial, heav'n is more than earth,
 Their home, the country of their heart and commerce ?
 If thus it is, and has been felt amongst us,
 What can I say but this, Value and keep
 Your happiness in Christ ! Weak are my words
 To teach whom he enlightens. Glad I am,
 However, that his love has fir'd my tongue
 To bear such witness to his grace and blood,
 As mov'd you oft to make a deeper search
 Into that mystery ; till a glance from Him,
 Fraught with the thing itself, left you and me
 Happy and dumb before our bounteous Lord
As I now am. O Jesu, thou art all !

AGA. Father, the penitents with tears beseech you
 To think of them before you go.

IGN.

Poor Men !

Let them draw near ; declare the truth, my Sons.
 To leave the loving Saviour, is it not
 A bitter thing ? Is it not worse than death ?
 Have you enjoy'd one easy hour by all
 That human wealth or wisdom could do for you,

While

While wretchedly by sin cut off from Him
And from his people's fellowship?

PEN.

O no!

Thro' deserts we have walk'd and found no rest.

IGN. Then may you find it now! May our good
Lord

Shine forth again with healing aspect on you!

Be as you were before with him and us!

Only remember, that the life of faith

Loses in joy and lustre by each fall,

Altho' the substance be retriev'd.

PEN.

Dear Saviour,

Receive us to the meanest of thy mansions!

PHI. The catechumens too your pleasure wait.

IGN. Come hither ye, whom from an evil world.

The name of Jesus draws! you count him sweet,

And great, and mighty, by that glimm'ring light

Your novice minds have gain'd. You venerate

That full acquaintance, and that vital union

Whereby the faithful know him: And to this

You now aspire. But can you then let go

Your manly wisdom, and become as babes

To learn new maxims and the mind of Christ?

Can you forsake your former ease and sun-shine

T' associate with a poor afflicted people,

The scorn of all mankind? Can you the weight

Of your whole souls, with all your hopes of God,

Rest on a long past action; and that such

As your Lord's mystic but opprobrious death;

Or on events which visionary seem,

A resurrection, and some second world?

Can you such gratitude and sov'reign love

Contract for One, who but with grace unseen

Assists you inwardly; that for His sake

You'll crucify your flesh, curb your own will,

And nothing but his servants be in life?

Dare you henceforward undertake these things?

CAT. We have consider'd them, and by God's help
We dare.

IGN.

Then you shall soon, by sacred rites,
Among us be admitted: and mean while,

If dear and blessed you account this day,
Sing your first praises to your Master's honour.

CATECHUMENS *sing* :

I.

O thou who dost lead each ignorant lamb
Of thy royal flock in Wisdoms bright ways,
Enable thy children, close knit in thy name,
Thee, Christ, friend of weak ones, with pure hearts to
praise !

II.

Thou art the great Word, and wisdom of God,
The Saviour of souls ; o'ercome by thy charms
Ev'n hearts cold and hopeless, deep sunk in sin's flood,
A taste of thy sweetness soon raises and warms.

III.

Be therefore our prince, our glory and guide ;
Thy steps are the path to virtue and bliss !
Who drink of thy Spirit, and in thee confide,
Their works are all comely, there's nothing amiss.

IV.

Grant us in thy word and grace so to grow,
That more solid praise to thee we may sing ;
In life and in doctrine incessantly shew
Our whole heart is justly giv'n up to our King.

V.

To God's holy Child, so strong to redeem,
By us, who thro' grace his likeness do bear,
Be glory for ever, while rooted in Him,
A people of prudence and peace we appear !

AGA. Now stand among the brethren, and partake
What further shall be said.

[*Cat. and Pen. stand among the Brethren.*]

ICN.

If any church

Is more oblig'd than others to maintain
The purity of faith, the flame of love,
And search the perfect meaning of the gospel,
'Tis ours, where first began the name of christians.
That name is much adorn'd by due demeanour
To those without ; with meekness of strong minds,
Bearing whate'er in blindness they shall do
To grieve us ; nor rejecting government,
Or ought that's wise or good in this world's course ;

But

But aboveall, that blessed knot be kept
 Of peace and love within ourselves. 'Tis this
 Detains our Lord among us ; who departs
 Soon, like the soul, from torn dissever'd limbs.
 While this continues, Satan shall not find
 Room to infuse his mischief ; nor shall I
 Be wanted ; you will all support and build
 Each other up. Be jealous then that nought,
 Plenty, nor fame, nor gifts of grace, be sweet
 To any, but in common with his brethren.
 Christ in each other see and serve ; nor let
 Suspicions or resentments rise betwixt you.
 But one word more : Sacred, you know, with us,
 Domestic order is and decency ;
 Let those who should obey and learn, submit
 Most gladly so to do, their easier lot ;
 Those who should teach and govern, as for Christ,
 Dispassionate and prudent, fill their place.
 Go thus thro' life, where poverty and toil
 In meanest occupation you must suffer,
 (And well you may with Christ within) if not
 The fiery trial. But our Lord will see,
 While you cleave to him, how to lead you on.
 In his great name I leave my Blessing with you !
 Philo, Agathopus, you'll go with me.

AGA. We humbly thank you, father.

PHI.

But you, brethren,

Bear on your heart your pastor's love, and strive
 If in life's easy common road you live,
 Yet still proportionably strong to feel
 The truths for which he goes his blood to spill.

[*Exeunt*]



A C T III.

S C E N E I.

SCENE *Smyrna. An outer Chamber in POLY-
CARP'S House.*

IGNATIUS *guarded by SOLDIERS.*

IGNATIUS (*aside.*)

THIS is the mansion of good Polycarp,
Disciple with me once of blessed John ;
He's indispos'd, or he had run too meet me.
Sweet interview I hope for, if these Leopards
Will but permit. Harsh have they been to me :
Do thou, O Lord, return it on their heads
In soft converting grace. I'll speak to them.
Did you observe, my friends, what past at sea ?

First Sol. We are not senseless: yes ; there was a
storm

Which lustily employ'd the skilful hands
Of our brave sailors.

IGN.

But are you aware

Of that good providence and pow'r divine
Which sav'd you in the roughest hour of danger,
That now at ease you might admire his love ?

Sol. This is your way, ye moralizing sect !
On ev'ry sight, or accident in life,
You introduce your God, your mystery ;
As if all life were some religious thing.
Then you rip up our faults ; yet can't retain
The air of masters long ; for when we shew
Our just resentment, you, like silly slaves,
Tamely digest both mockery and blows.

E

IGN.

IGN. May you in time know from what fund of soul
All this proceeds, what energy within
Makes us——

SOL. Old man, we are not thy disciples,
But keepers ; save thy voice for them that seek it.

IGN. Then my request will suit your inclinations.
Shall I have leave, while we abide at Smyrna,
T' associate with a brother in this place ?

SOL. Yes, in our eye. But we shall cut you short
Amidst your chat, and solemn pageantry
Of sighs, and pray'rs, and songs, and sentences,
So tedious when you meet. For soon at Rome
The sports come on, and we must bring the bishop
Where a throng'd audience will as usual wait
His looks and gesture ; likely now to yield,
Humane for once, some pleasure to mankind.
Go to your friend, and place us in some corner.

S C E N E II.

SCENE opens to an inner Chamber.

POLYCARP *sitting at one End*: IGNATIUS *goes up to him*. SOLDIERS *retire to the other End of the Room*.

IGN. How is my friend ? Feels he the mortal part
Oppress the fervent soul ?

POL. Not much, my brother,
'Tis but a slight disorder, and my Saviour
Is doubly careful to support within
My weary heart with pledges of his love.

IGN. I little thought, dear Polycarp, again
To see thy face.

POL. Full many rounds indeed
Have time, and human things, and human thoughts
Gone thro', since we before sat thus together.

IGN. We then were younger, but not otherwise
Much diff'rent : for the whirlpool of blind passion
Was, from the first, no element of ours.

POL.

POI. Just as we launch'd into a dang'rous world
God sent us a good pilot.

IGN.

So he did.

I often think, and shall to my last breath,
Of the last hours we spent with that great man.

POI. Is it partiality, or is it insight
Into the system of a dear friend's conduct,
That makes each little thing he says or does,
Speak more to us, than others are aware of?
But so it is. I see the holiness
Of John, not only in his elevations
That struck mankind, but even where he seem'd
T' express the human and the frailer side.
Thus in his playing, to unbend the mind
With a tame partridge, there's a tacit slur
On mortal care, as if he said, "Be easy,
Your projects and this play meet in a point."
So when old man, for lack of memory
And matter, as it seem'd, he oft repeated
One lesson, "Love the brethren." 'Twas we
know,

A thought extracted from a world of thinking.

IGN. Yes, charity was always his chief theme.

POI. And that from reasonings not at all supine,
Whate'er they were. I'm apt to think, the man
That could surround the sum of things, and spy
The heart of God and secrets of his empire,
Would speak but love: With him the bright result
Would change the hue of intermediate scenes,
And make one thing of all theology.
And John, 'tis certain, had an eagle's eye:
He saw whence all creation first began,
How it now lies, and where it ends at last:
He saw the mighty LOGOS moving thro' it
(Guardian of beings first within himself)
Ardent t' educe the powers and vary'd beauties
Of the deep Godhead, image of His Father.
And then, to raise in purity and joy,
A temp'ral world, more lax variety,
To be the second image; which, as child
Of grosser feature, should be cover'd o'er
With his kind radiance, and grow up in Him.

IGN. I rather should assign a nearer source.
 Within the bounds of time and of the church,
 For all his strains of love: The Word made flesh,
 Oft in his hearing gave our holy union
 The honour to stand next in saving souls
 To his own blood. Nay more had condescended
 To be himself a Brother; make but one
 Among a knot of friends: for so he seem'd,
 Th' apostle said *, to Peter and the rest,
 An easy, free, and but more knowing friend.

POL. But John was the great favourite: he was
 seated
 Still next to Jesus.

IGN. Yes, and might not that
 The near admission to such worth and sweetness
 Give him a bent to love? As 'tis well known,
 A man fresh come from one deserving object
 Can love a species in the shadow of it.

POL. That blessed converse seem'd indeed the softest
 As well as strongest image of his mind.
 At Jesu's name, with recollected awe,
 We'd stand adoring: He would drop a tear,
 As for an old acquaintance; then correct it
 With a mild smile, that let down his whole soul
 To simplest posture and a strange repose.
 Wonder not, sons, said he, that still my heart
 Emotions feels for Jesus as a man.
 I know Him such, most amiable and kind!
 And ev'ry little passage of his life
 In flesh, his walks, his lodging and repast,
 Nor without thists of poverty, recur.
 How many silly questions have we asked him,
 While he gave answers, that with all their depth
 Would also please? Cheerful he was to us;
 But let me tell you, sons, he was within
 A pensive man, and always had a load
 Upon his spirits.

IGN. That was for our sins.
 Mourning was His, that constant joy of faith
 Might be the character of our poor service,
 Whose guilt he bore, and drank up all our curse.

* John, whose disciple Ignatius was.

POL.

POL. O precious door of hope! how much did
John

Grieve, when the Gnostic heresy would shut it,
Denying Christ had flesh wherein to suffer?

IGN. This was one reason why the holy charge
Of the blest virgin who abode with him
Pleas'd him so much; she was a monument
Of Jesu's true humanity.

POL.

As that

Is likewise the great basis of our hope
Of resurrection and a glorious change,
Like his, from mortal to immortal flesh.

IGN. What that immortal flesh may be, was shewn
To John in awful vision, when he saw
(And scarce could bear the overwhelming favour)
His Jesus stand before him, now expressing
His heav'nly substance and his robes of light.

POL. What large discoveries to the end of time
Were then vouchsaf'd to John! he saw the rage
Of Antichrist prevailing, and the love
Of many waxing cold. He saw the throne
Where sits our Lamb, incessantly ador'd
By angel-hosts, and looking down meanwhile
On mortal man, and on his suffering church,
He saw the mighty judgment and the plagues
Of God's last wrath: From which the chosen bands
Into their New Jerusalem receiv'd,
Partake with Jesus a triumphant rest.

IGN. Low at the feet, not only of great John,
But of the meanest servant of my Lord,
May I be found that day! Yet must I tell
(Since Polycarp's no novice in these things)
What gifts of late, as I draw nearer death,
Are lent ev'n me. I can discern the scope
Of former dispensations; both the league
And difference of christianity and them.
I know the ranks and polity of angels,
And by this mouth, predictive of events
Then future, hath the Father truly spoke.

POL. I do believe it, brother, (and my soul
By sympathy has tasted of thy gifts
While thou didst speak) for doth not Christ indeed

Dwell in all his, and shew forth as he pleases,
Or graces, which the world calls wonderful,
Or those which with mere nature it confounds?

IGN. That is another doctrine sweetly taught
By our apostle : that we live in Christ,
Have fellowship with him, and on him grow
As branches on the vine ; that he's a light,
Vital and chearing to our inward man.
This short description does convey much more
Than the most labour'd circle of vain words.

POL. The station which we hold in Jesus now,
Redeem'd from earth, no words of man can reach ;
But you shall quickly know, my dear Ignatius,
What 'tis to be with him in better regions,
You'll see his face, and see it as a martyr.

IGN. Take comfort, Polycarp ! your time will
come.

My deacons should be back. I gave them leave
An hour or two to see the saints of Smyrna.

POL. Not to learn ought, when they have liv'd at
Antioch.

IGN. Yes, an appeal is made (as I perceiv'd
At sea) to your chief brethren's light and spirit,
About the christian life. My two young men
Are different in their natures ; and the warmest
Wants to transform the other to himself,
And this indeed were well, could it be done :
For I must own, Agathopus is faithful
And fervent in the work of Christ ; the more
Because he's purely what the gospel makes him,
Knowing no taste or theory besides.
But then the other likewise is sincere ;
Too much indeed entangled with the charms
Of philosophic liberty of thought,
Milky benevolence, and love of ease ;
Yet firm at heart to Christ ; how'er complexion,
Like a strong wind, may half a different way
Blow back the soul's loose vest.

POL. Is there no use
Whereto this latter genius may be turn'd?

IGN. To teach the wounded self-abhorring mind
A secret hope and patience with itself,

Is Philo's talent. As his sense is quick
 To equity, and caution, and decorum;
 And as he truly loves the human nature,
 He's farther useful to restrain excesses;
 And chiefly that, where most young converts err,
 A pique and enmity to unbelievers.
 But here they come.

Enter PHILO and AGATHOPUS.

PHI. You're happy, reverend father,
 In such a worthy flock.

AGA. But thou'rt condemn'd.

POL. I've heard the case: Shall I be arbitrator?
 Judge not each other any more, my sons!
 Each has his province: Thou, Agathopus,
 Of make impetuous, and by grace divine,
 Upright in faith, and full of christian fervour,
 Art destin'd to convert; thou shalt display,
 And strike the drowsy world with the strong blaze
 Of Christ's religion and it's true demands;
 Which are no lower than thou hast conceiv'd them.
 Philo shall follow thee, by nature form'd
 To be a comforter; and glean up those
 (As his heart shews him 'tis the mind of God)
 Not yet so firmly bound up in thy bundles,
 Nor mark'd illustriously th' Elect of Christ.

IGNA. I thank you Polycarp.

(Polycarp looks towards the end of the room.)

What see you there?

POL. One of the Soldiers looks extremely thoughtful,

A softness creeping o'er his hardy face;
 Now all the longing that an eye can carry
 He darts at you; then checks himself, and droops
 Fix'd on the earth. One step he just has taken,
 But fears to add a second.—Shall we call him?

IGNA. Yes, by all means.—Friend, would you speak
 with me?

(A Soldier advances from the rest up to Ignatius and Polycarp.)

SOL.

SOL. I am not worthy, holy man, to come
Into your presence.

IGNA. Why? what is the matter?

SOL. Don't you remember that a soldier struck
you?—

IGNA. I have forgot it.

SOL. And derided you
This very morning? I was the vile wretch
That did it: but this heart is humbled since.

IGNA. And what can I do for you?

SOL. Pardon me.

IGNA. That's done: What more?

SOL. I can't tell what! my soul
Draws to you strangely. 'Tis as if it melted
To take your mold. I wou'd be what you are!

IGNA. Christ make thee so, my son!

SOL. Why! can it be?
I spoke the word because methought 'twas sweet;
As a poor man got into some brave dream,
Lends himself to it, and keeps shut his eyes:
But when I open them, alas! for me
'There is no hope: I ne'er shall be like you!
I've been a wicked liver all my time. [Weeps.

IGNA. That need not hinder.

SOL. What not all those vices?
I'd name them, but I know they're things so strange
To you, that, tho' ' would ease me much I cannot
Permit the tale to stain your whitest thoughts.

IGNA. Poor man, whate'er beneath temptation's
hour,
Thy wand'ring path and broadest foolishness
Hath been, 't was from a nature not unknown,
And not unfelt by us.

SOL. Are not you holy?

IGNA. We are, thanks be to Christ.

SOL. So then, I learn
There lies the med'cine that can help ev'n me!
What does your Christ insist that one should do
To gain his favour? I would lance this flesh
With many a wound, or lie whole nights in frost.
Or——

IGNA.

IGN. O my child, he came not to impose
Suff'rings on you, but in your stead to suffer.
He died some years ago in Palestine,
Professedly and purely for your sins.

SOL. No, not for mine : for I was far away,
And ne'er acquainted with him.

IGN. But, my child,
He made you, and so knew your name and nature ;
And then, tho' God, He, with a parent's pity,
Became a man to cleanse you with his blood.

SOL. He helps me therefore, as at first he made me ?

IGN. 'Tis true, my child, and you were then but
dust,
And could do nothing.

SOL. I will sink again
To dust ; lie on this ground till he shall come
And take me up.

[Falls prostrate.]

IGN. O Son of God most high !
Look down, this is thy day : Be glorify'd
By healing this thy creature : Grant him peace,
And perfect what thou hast begun.

[Soldier rising up.]

SOL. Good father,
How do you find yourselves when God is with you ?
I feel a gentle flame within my breast
That seems to alter every nerve about me.
I'm lightsome now ; and my whole soul's directed
Up to those heav'ns, as if I had some friend
Residing there that never would forsake me.

IGN. And so thou hast, my son ; Christ now is thine,
For ever thine, and all thy sins forgiv'n !
Be a new man henceforth, and one of us.

ALL. All glory be to God and to the Lamb !

POL. Yea, praise to Him accessible and mild,
Who keeps no state with a returning child :
But free ordaining him an heir to-day
Of all his wealth, accel'rates the display,
Like the great ocean, when some dam gives way.
Let never narrow hearts the haste arraign
Of Jesus to relieve a sinner's pain :

He

He knows what is in man, nor to his art
 Are chaos and creation far apart.
 There's but a word between! Be that word giv'n,
 Your sinful soul shall be a saint of heav'n:
 And with his Maker pitch his tent more sweet,
 More firm, with these dark clouds beneath his feet.



A C T IV.

S C E N E I.

SCENE the outer Chamber of POLYCARP's House.

AGATHOPUS. PHILO.

AGATHOPUS.

THE hour approaches, when the messengers
 Of Asia's churches, who have been already
 Once with Ignatius, promis'd to return.

PHI. They'll be here soon: we'll tarry to receive
 them.

AGA. I never saw a sight more venerable,
 Or that gave higher thoughts of something real
 In christian faith and love, than when choice men,
 From different congregations of this province,
 Met all at Smyrna but to see our martyr.

PHI. Some of them please me much.

AGA. Yes, there's Onesimus,
 Bishop of Ephesus, all over love
 And tenderness to souls.

PHI. None strikes me more
 Than the Magnesian chief, Damus, I think,
 A bishop in his youth. There's a fine soul
 Within that man.

AGA. Not to forget the grave
 Polybius of Tralles, wife and plain.

PHI. Our different likings are not now so fierce.

AGA.

AGATHOPUS. No, Philo, we are one! I lay me under
Thy spirit, like the ground thou tread'st upon,
And would give up whate'er I have to purchase
One feature of the soul I so misjudg'd.

PHILO. Honest Agathopus, still thou art fervent!
There is no cause for that. Thou hast thy path,
And that as much more excellent than mine
As the bright sun excels the sickly moon,
For all the strong in faith, who snatch the prime
Of gospel grace, and it's meridian fires,
Are thine; while I th' inglorious croud befriending,
Who creep benighted in the rear of hope.

AGATHOPUS. Ay, Philo, you were always mild to sinners.
I hardly ever saw one reconcil'd,
But my heart blam'd the condescending terms.
But 'twas not so last night. Were I in glory,
I could have pluck'd the crown from my own head
To put it on the soldier's.

PHILO. Thou wast never
Stain'd with foul crimes, Agathopus; but I
Have been a deep offender, and can yearn
Over a loathsome lazar like myself.
I never told thee how I was converted:
Cilicia was my native land. My father,
Too fond and easy, put it in my pow'r
To pamper ev'ry taste; he found his error:
And scarce reproving me, he let me see
He dy'd for grief. This was reproof indeed
To me who dearly lov'd him; and ne'er felt
(That I must say) ev'n in the life of sin,
Harsh passions. Much I thought of leaving life,
But left the place where I had kill'd a parent.
After some wand'ring, I, in anguish still,
Return'd to Tarsus. The good bishop there
Set forth the cleansing virtue of Christ's blood;
I went to hear him; for I was so dead
To all this world, I now ne'er shun'd reproach.
Then first my soul conceiv'd a glimm'ring hope;
I saw a greater Father had been griev'd,
But well for me! so great he could remit
The complications of impieties.

I was

I was baptiz'd, chose deacon, came to Antioch
On business, where Ignatius ask'd to keep me.

AGA. Whate'er thou wast, O Philo, heretofore,
I see thee now a saint and born of God :
Yea, since mine eyes are open, I discover
Thy daily acts and spirit of thy life
Have all the principle, tho' not the pomp
Of high perfection and a light divine ;
And, like an expert swordsmen, thou dost more
By slow, and smooth, and unsuspected motions,
Than I perhaps with all my brandishes.

PHI. I think not so, my friend! 'Tis men like
you,

That must support christianity. The reasons
Of that admitted once, require thenceforth
A constant ardour, an exerted soul
Still on the wing with some ecstasie warmth.
If e'er this fails, men of my turn, who now
Make no unpleasing discord to the gospel,
(For 'tis a discord) lost in stronger numbers
Of you, who still bear up the genuine sound :
If e'er I say, your brave and worthy voices
Shall under ours subside, we shall invent
Some foreign harmony, and cast off Christ's.
But I would hear what work of God has past
Upon thy soul Agathopus.

AGA.

I was

At Antioch born, bred up by christian rules ;
And ne'er defil'd with so much outward sin,
As with due emphasis might shew the need
I had of Jesus, and endear his blood.
Yet, by one comprehensive glance, did God
Teach me the truth of things. I had one morning
Kneel'd down to pray'r, my most delightful task ;
When all at once a croud of horrid thoughts,
Fraught with the images and rankest venom
Of all the vices that e'er man committed,
Broke in upon my soul. I was amaz'd
To see myself from ev'ry shape of good,
Where I had built my rest, immensely back,
As on some desert island thrown, where seem'd
No hopes of succour. But the Saviour came,

And

And with his splendor brighten'd all the place.
 Redeem'd I was from real sin ; and felt
 Both those quick terrors, and that great deliv'rance
 In comfort as intense, which lie beneath
 A gospel we so indolent enjoy.

PHI. Blest must you be, and always nigh to Christ,
 While you preserv'd this light.

AGA. All souls must do so.
 Our freshest mem'ry still must hold before us
 The wonder and true joy of that first hour,
 When fear and sin, to hope and innocence,
 By clear, by firm, tho' sudden steps were chang'd.
 So shall we ever praise the power of Christ,
 Which grants this leave and mystic privilege
 To us, so rotten in ourselves, to stand
 Free now from ev'ry spot of human follies.—
 There's some one coming in.

PHI. 'Tis only Claudius.
 Poor soul ! he hangs upon us, and can scarce
 Bear to be stationed with his brutish fellows.

Enter CLAUDIUS the Soldier.

CLAUD. My dearest brethren ! how shall I express
 What our good Lord does for me ! night and day
 I find him with me, and He shews me still
 Fresh wonders ! What a thing is Jesu's love !
 Soft is my heart as infant's flesh ; yet able,
 Like adamant or steel, to stand the shock
 Of death, and hell, and cut its way thro' all.
 There's something in me, moment after moment,
 Spreading and rising like a tree of life :
 I follow it, and scarce feel the ground I tread on.
 I'm wholly Christ's ! But how can I be his,
 O tell me, in a soldier's rough profession ?
 Must I kill men ?

PHI. You mean, must not you love them ?
 Yet you're a member of this world, whose process
 Involves e'en us in many things.—But see,
 The deputies are coming.

CLAUD.

I'll retire.

[Exit Claudius.]

Enter

F

*Enter ONESIMUS, POLYBIUS, DAMAS, with
other Messengers of the Churches.*

ONE. Again we come to wait on good Ignatius.
Is he at leisure ?

PHI.

I'll go in and see,

[Exit Philo.]

AGA. Then he is talked of in your several countries ?

ONE. We all admire so bright a character.

AGA. What if, like us, you ever at his side
Had seen his life and conduct ?

DAM.

You were happy.

We come from far, and don't repent the labour,
But once to taste the graces of his spirit.

AGA. He was a man so pure in private life,
So all-devoted to the things above,
So mere a servant both of Christ and men :
You'd say he acted without spark of nature,
Save that each motion flow'd with ease and beauty.
Then such a pastor was he, so intent
To guard from errors, and build up in Christ
(In wisdom, innocence, and unity)
Each simple soul ; so gentle too therein,
No heart but blest itself it had a father.
How would he moan when any persecution
Threaten'd the flock ! and (which in him was great)
Rejoice at its removal ; tho' thereby
Debarr'd himself from all his wish on earth.
He'd say, when fell Domitian's rage gave o'er,
" Now I shall never be a true disciple,
" And die for Christ."

POL.

Glad would I hear more of him,
Pattern of bishops ! But lo, Philo comes.

Re-enter PHILO.

PHI. Ignatius, honour'd Elders, now attends you.

SCENE



S C E N E II.

SCENE opens to the Inner Chamber.

IGNATIUS and POLYCARP.

*Enter to them ONESIMUS, POLYBIUS, DAMAS,
&c. PHILO and AGATHOPUS.*

ONE. We told you in the morning, blessed man,
What sorrow and what warmth your holy bonds
Spread thro' the churches. They could do no less
Than send us to salute you; and to knit
By all th' advantage of this dread occasion
Our common love; and enter as we can
Into the hope and might of Jesus with you.

IGN. To love me, they did well: for much I want
The kind assistance of each christian soul.
I hope all give it me. Pray for me, brethren!

POL. We do.

DAM. May nothing, when the time shall come,
Blemish thy combat!

IGN. Ay, that prayer was right.
For I have weakness still, and ghostly foes
Which fight against me and my resolution.
Heav'n knows, I am a sinner! and deserve
To die more deaths than one on that account.
What favour then, O Lord, that wretched flesh
Shall honour thee, while sinking to its dust!

ONE. We wait upon you now, to know your will
And orders to the churches: Since to-morrow
You sail to Rome; and we, alas! return,
Not worthy yet of chains, to our own flocks.

IGN. See, I have writ some hasty letters for you
To carry back. And give my humble thanks
To every congregation.

[Servant appears at the door.]

POL. Who is there ?
Letters from Antioch for you, Ignatius.

[*Ignatius reads letters.*]

IGN. Dirce is dead, Agathopus ! I find,
One of the heathens passing in the tumult,
When we went off, struck her as 't were in sport,
And her glad soul took flight. The news that follows
I can't conceal from you, my rev'rend brethren :
All things at Antioch, by our Saviour's care,
Are quiet now again : So tell the churches.
Were it not well if each would send some brother
To greet my flock upon the mercy shewn them ?
But still, poor orphans, there's no bishop chose :
Think of them, Polycarp.

POL. Your care, as pastor,
Shall leave it's due impression on my breast.
For that be easy. And since now are met
Such distant bishops, presbyters, and deacons,
Well representing th' universal church,
Let me suggest employment for this ev'ning.

IGN. What is it ?

POL. You, Ignatius, as our Lord
Will give you light, shall hint some gen'ral cautions,
Tending to keep the church thro' ev'ry age
From such corruptions as may hurt the plan,
Or cloud the purity it y'er retains.

IGN. With all my heart. Thou Friend of souls,
direct us !
And ever guide all those on whom the charge,
The sacred charge of thy great mystery
(*God in the flesh*, saving by precious faith
Poor sinners) shall devolve in future times !
Long have I fear'd, there is a depth of Satan,
Which from pretences fair, and warm pursuit
Of real parts, but not the proper center
Of truth and holiness, will circumvent
The church at last. Strange the extremes would seem,
To which this well pois'd soundness of our system
By partial aggravations may be wrought :
But worse, if possible, and more deplor'd
That infidel indifference which succeeds them.
For when so oft bewilder'd and deceiv'd,

A general

A general fastidious indolence
 Fixes the mind, 'tis hard to move it more.
 I calculate the fates of christian faith
 By dispositions in the make of men.
 Three sorts I have observ'd. For some there are
 Severe and solemn, like the Pharisees,
 Allur'd by pomp and form. Some are again
 Of fine and tender mold, and urge the path
 Like Essenes*, of a rapturous devotion.
 And lastly, some (well turn'd for human life,
 But the most fatal, when their day shall come,
 To our religion) fit like Sadducees,
 Cool moderators of their brethren's fires,
 Their mark and inspiration common sense.
 The first and last of these, as with the Jews,
 May in their turn, command the public stream.
 The third have some eruptions more retir'd.

ONE. Be pleas'd to shew by what unhappy steps
 Each of these spirits may deface the gospel.

IGN. First let me mention what is the great center
 And heart of it: which while it moves within,
 And actuates, whatever outward frame
 Of man's ideas, still there is one life,
 Rich life wide ranging thro' varieties.
 For have not we, ev'n now, those sev'ral tastes
 Amongst us? yet hereby all sanctify'd.
 Your conscious souls prevent me while I point
 The anchor of your calling. 'Tis a faith
 Depending only on the blood of Christ,
 And nothing of our own from first to last.
 This keeps us now in great simplicity:
 For happy here, we lay no eager weight

* These were three chief sects of the Jews: The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Of the two first frequent mention is made in the gospels. The last made less noise, and seemed at the time of our Lord's walking on earth not to be numerous, though they increased considerably afterwards. They maintained the resurrection of the body against the Sadducees; they were very devout and abstemious, but avoided the ostentation of the Pharisees; they did not swear, they excommunicated those who did not walk orderly, and they were much given to fasting and contemplation.

On other things, but use them in their place.
 Posterity, I fear, will fail here soon.
 For thus, in nakedness of faith to hang,
 Amidst whate'er we do, or know, or have,
 On foreign aid and merit; nor permit
 Nature to say, she's owner of one thing:
 This is an edge so fine, 'twill turn and warp;
 The more, because a raw and novice world
 Will not be tender of it; having still
 So many other plausible resorts,
 That court the fancy, and are christian too:
 As influx of the Spirit, ceremonies,
 And morals (to wholist to see no more)
 Of christian law. Each sev'ral taste now laps'd,
 Of course pursues, adorns some one of these.
 The soft, contemplative, and Essene genius
 Both makes the noblest choice, and docs least harm.

DA. I long to hear you paint the course of that.

IGN. What ghostly energy and mystic life
 Do we now feel within! We have this jewel;
 Yet on it's radiance do not choose to gaze
 Directly, but with humble hand hold fast
 The casket where it lies, Faith in Christ's blood.
 But as the knowledge of that tenure fails,
 Each warm devotionist will strive to fix
 The now departing Shekinah by nice
 Tho' impotent descriptions; will reduce
 All to a science, and to each attainment
 Prescribe a way of art and false ambition.
 See you how this may be?

DA. I see too plain
 The Spirit's self on Jesus may be made
 T' encroach.

IGN. But this is light to what ensues.
 We highly value now our solemn rites,
 Symbols of love, and of our Lord's protection;
 And much we press obedience to the pastor.
 But O, what I foresee may flow from this
 In a dark age; when int'rest on one hand,
 And on the other childishness of thought
 And Pagan gloom, for superstition ripe,
 Will by our use confirm that iron yoke!

The clergy will be lords, and endless forms
Hide from the church her Saviour's face.

P O L Y.

Alas,

That ordinances in his name begun
Should cease to preach Him only to poor souls!

I G N. The worst is yet to come. When christian
faith

Has worn all weakneses of th' human spirit,
And been derided thro' them, 'twill be deem'd
Expedient to appoint a jealous guardian,
The fire and wild luxuriance to correct
Of this strange principle. Low, and more low,
By treach'rous praise of it's own moral precepts,
Shall it be brought in all it would persuade
Or work, from it's diviner plan and power,
Beyond the measures of mere human life.
Till by degrees bold reason recommends
Her own unmingled system, nature's light,
And will not suffer on that scheme to hang
(Tho' long but tolerated like the laws
Of conquer'd countries) the bare name of Jesus.
As he had died in vain, with great applause
The world rolls back to what it was before.

O N E. O Adam! Adam! we no more blame thee:
We too have tasted paradise, and fell,
Look'd over Jesus to know good and evil.

I G N. I see, my brethren, the last scene I've drawn
Too much affects you; it drinks up your spirits:
What shall I say? 'twont be till distant ages.

O N E. Our love extends to all: That's no relief.

I G N A. Why then I have (if I must bring it forth)
What will, I'm sure, the present grief expel,
Tho' not as I could wish. Look nearer home:
Are Smyrna, Ephesus, Magnesia dear t' you?

O N E. Dearer than life.

I G N. Then long before this plague
Shall overspread the earth, all these your churches
Shall lose their christian glory, scarce retain
Savour of Christ, or symbol of their hope,
Ravag'd and trodden down by infidels.

P O L Y. Nay then, we're silent! Judgments are to
come,

And

And foul apostasies. Let us make haste
To die, my brethren, lest the gospel lamp
Go out before us.

DA.

No, recall that word,

Howe'er distress or error may deform
The spouse of Christ, his love will ever last.
And when these storms are o'er, and man's each pas-
sion

Hath had its day, its swing and penitence
In holy things; then purest light again,
The sweet recover'd infancy of faith,
Shall bless the earth, and introduce that kingdom,
Where Christ the king of peace shall stand confest,
Admir'd in all his saints and all his works.

POL. This is the sum, my brethren! CHRIST is

ALL:

If e'er we lean to other things, we fall.
Spirit, and rites, and reason too are good,
If planted and if glorying in His blood.
Faith is so simple, whence all good doth spring,
Mankind can't think it is so great a thing:
Still o'er this pearl steps their ambitious pride
Pursuing gladly any form beside.
Yet, O good Saviour! narrow as it is,
And delicate, and prone for man to miss,
Ne'er be the way shut up to this our bliss!
No, everlasting be thy gospel, Lord,
And thro' all time its saving power ador'd!



A C T V.

S C E N E I.

SCENE Rome, just without the City.

The City Walls and Gate lying before, and some old Ruins on one Hand.

Two PHILOSOPHERS.

First PHILOSOPHER.

YOU seem to like this place, as if one step
Was precious from the follies of the town :
But you look'd musing. Pray what was the object ?

Second PHI. Why truly the poor christians. For it
seems

This day, this Thirteenth of the Spectacles,
Some noted priest of theirs, a prisoner brought
In the last ship, shall be expos'd to beasts.

First PHI. And are those silly wretches worth a
thought ?

Second PHI. Perhaps worth sev'ral, brother. For
you know

We who seek truth must not be prejudic'd.

First PHI. I don't myself believe the monstrous stories
Reported of them ; but I think them persons
Soft and precipitate to each new whim,
And not much us'd to reas'ning.

Second PHI. Be it so.

But whence then comes their constancy in suffering,
Their more than Roman fortitude of spirit ?

First PHI. From great enthusiastic warmth.

Second PHI. Well said !

And will enthusiasm then (with all

The

The decencies of life and civil duty
 Preserv'd) make men so gen'rous and heroic ?
 For whether they be reasoners or no,
 I'll give a reason why their sect should stand.

First PHI. One would not call in madness to support
 E'en virtue's self! Enthusiasm's no less.

Second PHI. Here we recur to the first doubt ; which
 was,

Whether for those particular opinions,
 Which thus inspire and heat them, they can shew
 Rational grounds ? If so, it is not madness.
 Man's scrutiny absolves them, if their lines
 And gen'ral motives, which sustain all round
 Their faith and conduct, be but rightly drawn :
 Whate'er within this circle lies of bold,
 Or fervent, or ecstatic, is referr'd
 To impulse of the deity they worship.
 But 'tis a quality in the whole nature,
 And sep'rate from the tenet of enthusiasms,
 I yet consider.

First PHI.

What is that ?

Second PHI.

'Tis joy,

The spring of hearty, strong, and graceful actions,
 What makes all worth, all elegance of wit,
 Yea all benevolence, but this one feeling,
 Or from good blood, from sense of ornament,
 Or casual good humour ? Hence in vain
 Do we philosophers erect such minds,
 Which can admit none of these genial charms :
 They sink again. For we infuse but reason :
 Not glowing health, nor fibres turn'd to honour ;
 Nor, like the christian priests, can we convey
 A foreign joy more elevating yet,
 Enthusiasm.

First PHI.

What you say is just : But still

I'd not work up a rapture like those priests,
 By doctrines so irrational and weak.
 The joy's not bad, engine indeed of virtue,
 Had it a good foundation.

Second PHI.

Stop and think !

Is it the movement, which perhaps alone
 Can raise a lively and ingenuous flow

Of virtue, the free blossom of such minds
As are already happy; and hath God
Left no room, think you, or foundation for it?

First PHI. Yes, you have shewn 'tis wove with our
complexion.

Second PHI. That's not enough; if we such virtue mean,
(As sure we do who hold the soul immortal)
As looks beyond the use and present lustre
Of human life; and hath its great affair
With the Divinity, his grace or frown.
Here by analogy the rule's the same;
Joy precedes virtue: But it must be joy
Upon this state, and in this line of things:
The vot'ry must behold his God propitious,
Himself admitted as an humble friend:
Easy of heart, and confident henceforth;
Then will he rise to the great character,
By excellence of soul, that ne'er appear'd
Before this Entheon's interview with heav'n.

First PHI. You've got into the center of their first
And most obnoxious doctrine (for the other
Of some good spirit or divine afflatus
Upon the mind may fairly be allow'd),
To ev'ry profelyte at first admission
Full innocence they lend: whate'er his crimes
Before have been, he's white, and free, and just,
And equall'd with the veterans of virtue,
First wears the laurel, then begins the fight.
Make this consistent, and I'll ask no more.

Second PHI. I think I can. For let us now suppose,
He that rejoices, is by force of that
Dispos'd for good; and he, who by some glance
From the mild deity, triumphs in his love,
Moves then to higher good; displays at once,
However abject or perverse before,
Relenting gratitude and holy worth:
If so, one may with virtue be endow'd
At once.

First PHI. But this is rarely seen.

Second PHI. 'Tis true,

Yet the objection does not drive me back
From what benign effects I said would follow

On joy divine ; but urge me to enquire
Why this kind glance is not bestow'd on all ?

First PHI. That I can tell. Because mankind are
under

The power of vice,

Second PHI.

That cannot be ; for this

Is what destroys that power which never melts
But at this fire.

First PHI.

Yet may not ranker vice,

Foul with it's brutish habits, be in nature
A bar to th' operation ?

Second PHI.

Not at all.

This joy, if giv'n, does there the very same
As in clear minds, it meets th' ingenuous springs
Of our great soul conceal'd beneath the rubbish.

First PHI. But 'tis not given, yourself then tell us why.

Second PHI. God is a governor ; and acts indeed

By rules political, and not as we
Would trace him still with geometric scale,
By mere connections and capacities
In physical existence. Hence pure guilt,
Debt, and affront, and breach of covenant,
Ideas strange to us ! tie up the hand
That might, if simple nature were consider'd,
At any moment work all virtues in us.

First PHI. If guilt's the obstacle, then it's removal
May well be sudden, and all good flow in.
The christians do indeed employ their care
On guilt itself ; so taught by old tradition
Descending from the jews And now methinks
I can see farther in their scheme. If God
Acts as you represent him, and with-holds
His chearing presence from the human mind
On motives politic ; then on the like
He may restore it. Guilt's political ;
Deriv'd external merit is no more.
Yet this I thought ridiculous indeed,
That they account themselves belov'd of God
For what another did.

Second PHI.

'Twas, I suppose,

Their Founder.

First PHI.

Yes.

Second

Second PHI.

Why this is (as you say)

Good in the use and equity of state,
That to a corporation from it's head
Merit should pass, and dignity dilated
Cloath every branch with honours of the root.
And truly, I've long look'd on this expedient
As the most fit and delicately suited
To give at once both room for God to bless,
Nor yet make man or petulant or proud.
The late dark sky and images of guilt
Keep their reality: but only serve
T' illustrate present safety; as we see
The broken weapons hideous to behold,
Brighten and triumph o'er some barbarous land.
Man now is happy; but 'tis plain by whom!
Not by himself; the Patron stands before
To face the Godhead, and obtain it's gifts:
He at a distance terminates his care
And glad tho' feeble service on this Friend,
His own, his softer and compendious God.
What a sweet passion to this Benefactor;
What plain infantile gaiety of heart,
And yet what outward greatness of deportment:
In short, what a new set of sentiments
Would burst from the recesses of the soul,
Which should believe itself divine and happy,
Through the whole length of ages, and all this
By the *mere love* and *wonderful atchievement*
Of One who left such *merits* once, and still
Affords his virtual presence to his friends!
All this I do, I must imagine—tho'
I'll speak no more, lest you should think me christian.

First PHI. Whoe'er thinks me not much their enemy
Henceforward, shall not put me to the blush.
As for their meetings and their private rules,
They're a society, and so must have them.

Second PHI. Enough! Here comes the martyr, we'll
retire.

First PHI. We are not worthy now, good man, to
stay
And join thy train; another time we may.

[*Exeunt.*



S C E N E II.

Enter IGNATIUS, guarded by Soldiers: Several Roman Christians accompany him. AGATHOPUS and PHILO following after.

IGN. 'Twas very kind, my brethren, that you came
So far to meet us. Had I been permitted,
In honour of the steps of holy Paul,
I from Puteoli on foot had travell'd.
Thus far 'tis well! This is imperial Rome:
And I a bishop from the distant East,
Now see the countries of the setting sun:
I too am come to set! but rise again
In Jesus Christ.

ROMAN CHR. Are you resolv'd to die?
We could perhaps induce the people yet
Not to require you for their savage sports.

IGN. O don't attempt it! Ne'er shall I again
Have such a gale to waft me to my God.
Were I like Paul and Peter, a freed man
In Christ, and perfect, to make no such motion,
I would command you. I am yet a slave:
But do intreat you not to hinder me,
For by this death I shall obtain my freedom.

ROMAN CHR. Are there no motives to persuade
your life?

IGN. No, I have nothing more to do on earth.
My loves and my desires are crucify'd;
There's not a spark of fire or warmth within me
To things below: But that same living water
Promis'd by Jesus hath extinguish'd all.
It springs to life eternal in my heart,
And calls me onward only to the Father.
Tedious to me is corruptible food,
And ev'ry joy of life. The bread of God
I hunger for, the flesh of Jesus Christ:
His blood I'd drink; that is, I would be made

Immortal

Immortal with him in the state of love.
 I do not wish to be one moment longer
 This man, this dark and miserable being:
 And tho' I'm yet alive (you see I am
 Because I speak) my heart is all on death.

ROMAN CHR. But 'tis a cruel death that they intend you.

IGN. Let fire, and cross, and troops of rav'nous beasts,

Let tearing, grinding of this total frame,
 Let ev'ry art of pain the devil owns,
 Come on me, so I but enjoy my Jesus.
 I am God's wheat, the lion's jaw must bruise it.
 So shall I make clean bread fit to present
 In God's high sanctuary.

ROMAN CHR. But can't you,
 O rev'rend father, be a friend of Christ,
 And yet continue here?

IGN. O no, I cannot,
 I can't be true to the great mystery,
 The life of faith, while in the world I'm seen.
 Nothing that can be seen is fully right:
 And only then I am a good disciple,
 When e'en my body (tho' but in the paunch
 Of a brute beast, and by a change of forms)
 Is yet withdrawn from this bad world's inspection.
 There has one object been disclos'd on earth
 That might commend the place? but now 'tis gone:
 Jesus is with the Father, and demands
 His members to be there. Him do I seek
 Who died, who rose for us. In gaining him,
 I shall be rich enough. Pardon me, brethren!
 You must not stand between me and my life,
 Nor weigh me down when I ascend to God.
 No, let me now pass upwards to partake
 Unfulfilled light, and be what he would have me.
 No, let me now the passion imitate
 Of Christ my God. Do any of you feel
 Him in your heart? Then you can sympathize.
 You know my straits, what sacred ties I'm under.

ROMAN CHR. We'll not resist you more: God's will be done.

IGN. Pray tell me, keepers, There on our left hand,
That mossy fragment of a wall, what is it?

SOL. 'Tis an old burying place now laid aside.

IGN. Laid aside, said you? so shall all this world
Be soon. Good Soldiers, let me lean against it
One moment. Brethren, shan't we pray together?

[*Ignatius kneeling by the old wall.*]

IGN. Thanks to thy love, almighty Son of God,
Which, o'er the steps of all my life extending,
Gave me to know thy name and saving might:
And now to taste the bliss of dying for thee.
Grant to the churches rest and mutual love,
And holy gifts, and lively confidence
In thee. Bring on that blessed end of all things.

[*The brethren whisper and stand up.*]

What is't, my friends?

ROMAN CHR. The sports are just concluding,
And you in haste are sent for.

IGN. I am ready.
Come Soldiers, come Agathopus and Philo! you,
Some of you, friends, keep praying in this place.

[*Exeunt Ignatius, Soldiers, Philo, and Agathopus,
to the Amphitheatre. Manent some Roman Chris-
tians.*]

First ROM. CHR. Who can help praying now? My
very soul
Is on the stretch, and busy with her God,
About some big request I cannot utter,
Nor comprehend.

Second ROM. CHR. The time of great affliction,
Or great suspense is sacred, and exceeds
The common bounds of thinking.

First ROM. CHR. And of power,
For sure, till now, I never felt such strength
And energy of spirit; flesh and the world
No more retard me, than if not in being.
I would do something! would do any thing!
For some eternal nerves are wak'd within me,
Some strange alacrity, which, if it lasted,
Would be the body's death, and shake it off
Without or puny sickness or a groan.

Second

Second ROM. CHR. But stop, my brother, let us
now be faithful

To the good martyr's orders, and pray for him.

First ROM. CHR. I pray too much for words. I
pray for all things,

All time, and all eternity at once.

What would you more?

Second ROM. CHR. Only to recollect
And stand in awful silence here awhile
Before our heav'nly Master, doing no more
But this, to have Ignatius on our heart.

First ROM. CHR. Content.

Third and Fourth ROM. CHR. O Lord, be present
with thy servants!

[*They pray some time silently.*]

Second ROM. CHR. Now I am forc'd myself to break
the silence.

Did you perceive that breath of purer air
Which spread a sweet simplicity and calm
Over our soul? Indeed the Lord is with us!
I fancy this mild signal shew'd the moment
When great Ignatius mounted to the skies.
'Tis so; for see, the deacon comes to tell us.

Enter PHILO.

PHI. Christians, rejoice! your brother is at rest,
Safe in the arms of Christ, above the toils
And hazards of an earthly pilgrimage.

ROM. CHR. The manner of his martyrdom we long
To hear.

PHI. 'Twas quickly o'er. Two hungry lions
Kept for him were let loose with a loud shout,
And mingled horror of some softer hearts
Thro' the whole amphitheatre. He first
Look'd up to heav'n, and then let gently fall
His eyes to earth, as one whose suit was heard,
Nor needed that he should solicit more.
And so it was e'en to a circumstance.
He always wish'd there might, if possib'e,
Be no remains of his, which we survivors
Might stoop to gather, or regard as martyrs.

And

And very few are left (Agathopus
 And Claudius glean what is) he has his grave
 Compleatly in the beasts, the place which he
 With such partic'lar pleasure destin'd for it :
 I saw this pleasure in his looks ; and 'twas
 The last I saw of him : For while he stood
 As one that would have strok'd the grisly brutes,
 They seiz'd upon him, and devour'd him up.

Enter AGATHOPUS and CLAUDIUS.

ROMAN CHR. And did he leave us then no dying words ?

PHI. He scarce had time to speak, yet he said something,

A word or two, but I could not hear what.

AGA. I'll tell you, brethren, what Ignatius said :
 What his death preaches to you—Let your life
 Be hid with Christ. Choak not by worldly care,
 Or earthly joy, that emanation fair
 Of Christ's own mind, the new implanted seed
 Of Christian holiness : But ever feed
 And more expand it by the works of love,
 And foll'wing your good instincts from above.
 For not in vain, or with some low design
 Were you engrafted into Christ your vine :
 But you with him, in whom your whole trust lies,
 Shall to divine inheritances rise ;
 Stand with Ignatius on that better shore,
 As dear to Christ as he that went before !

PHI. Here we disperse. Agathopus and I
 Return to Antioch. Where are you, Claudius,
 Order'd to be ?

CLA.

At Rome.

PHI.

Then here you see

The brethren you must join with.

[Roman Christians giving him the hand.]

ROMAN CHR. Take the pledge
 Of dearest love and fellowship immortal.

CLA. My first instructors, by whose friendly voice
 I learnt to trust in Jesus ! Must I part
 With you ?

AGA.

AGA. Yes, Claudius, and 'tis no great thing.
We with these friends must part; both with Ignatius.
They ere their thirsty souls had time to know
And knit with his; we after a strict union
Of many years. With our exterior state
'Tis thus. But Christ within is ever sure,
The same in youth and age, at Rome or Antioch.
One source of joy to each believing breast,
Where we all drink, and live, and meet at last.

F I N I S.

SPIRITUAL AND CIVIL

LETTERS

ON

DIVERSE SUBJECTS.

